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CECILIA,

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OF AN

HEIRESS.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF EVELINA.

THE FIFTH EDITION.

IN FIVE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:

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CECILIA.

BOOK V.

CHAPTER I.

A BOLD STROKE.

WHEN Cecilia returned home, ſhe heard with much concern that no tidings of Mr. Harrel had yet been obtained. His lady, who did not ſtay out late, was now very ſeriouſly frightened, and entreated Cecilia to ſit up with her till ſome news could be procured: ſhe ſent alſo for her brother; and they all three, in trembling expectation of what was to enſue, paſſed the whole night in watching.

At ſix o'clock in the morning, Mr. Arnott beſought his ſiſter and Cecilia to take ſome reſt, promiſing to go out himſelf to every place where Mr. Harrel was known to reſort, and not to return without bringing ſome account of him.

Mrs. Harrel, whoſe feelings were not very acute, finding the perſuaſions of her brother were ſeconded by her own fatigue, conſented to follow his advice, and deſired him to begin his ſearch immediately.

A few moments after he was gone, while Mrs. Harrel and Cecilia were upon the ſtairs, they were ſtartled by a violent knocking at the door. Cecilia, prepared for ſome calamity, hurried her friend back to the drawing-room, and then flying out of it again to enquire who entered, ſaw, to her equal ſurpriſe and relief, Mr. Harrel himſelf.

She ran back with the welcome information, and he inſtantly followed her. Mrs. Harrel eagerly told him of her fright, and Cecilia expreſſed her pleaſure at his return: but the ſatisfaction of neither was of long duration.

He came into the room with a look of fierceneſs the moſt terrifying, his hat on, and his arms folded. He made no anſwer to what they ſaid, but puſhed back the door with his foot, and flung himſelf upon a ſofa.

Cecilia would now have withdrawn, but Mrs. Harrel caught her hand to prevent her. They continued ſome minutes in this ſituation; and then Mr. Harrel, ſuddenly riſing, called out, "Have you any thing to pack "up?"

"Pack up?" repeated Mrs. Harrel; "Lord bleſs me, for what?"

"I am going abroad," he anſwered; "I "ſhall ſet off to-morrow."

"Abroad?" cried ſhe, burſting into tears; "I am ſure I hope not!"

"Hope nothing!" returned he, in a voice of rage; and then, with a dreadful oath, he ordered her to leave him and pack up.

Mrs. Harrel, wholly unuſed to ſuch treatment, was frightened into violent hyſterics; of which, however, he took no notice, but ſwearing at her for *a fool who had been the cauſe of his ruin*, he left the room.

Cecilia, though ſhe inſtantly rang the bell and haſtened to her aſſiſtance, was ſo much ſhocked by this unexpected brutality, that ſhe ſcarcely knew how to act, or what to order. Mrs. Harrel, however, ſoon recovered, and Cecilia accompanied her to her own apartment, where ſhe ſtayed, and endeavoured to ſooth her till Mr. Arnott returned.

The terrible ſtate in which Mr. Harrel had at laſt come home, was immediately communicated to him; and his ſiſter entreated him to uſe all his influence that the ſcheme for going abroad might be deferred, at leaſt, if not wholly given up.

Fearfully he went on the embaſſy, but ſpeedily, and with a look wholly diſmayed, he returned. Mr. Harrel, he ſaid, told him that he had contracted a larger debt of honour than he had any means to raiſe; and as he could not appear till it was paid, he

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"O madam," interrupted he, "imagine not I ſent to you with ſo treacherous a view as to involve you in our miſery; far too unworthily has your generoſity already been abuſed. I only wiſh to conſult with you what I can do with my ſiſter."

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"Alas!

"Alas!" cried he, "I have already made that propoſal, but Mr. Harrel will not go without her, though his whole behaviour is ſo totally altered, that I fear to truſt her with him."

"Who is there, then, that has more weight with him?" ſaid Cecilia; "ſhall we ſend for Sir Robert Floyer to ſecond our requeſt?"

To this Mr. Arnott aſſented, forgetting, in his apprehenſion of loſing his ſiſter, the pain he ſhould ſuffer from the interference of his rival.

The Baronet preſently arrived, and Cecilia, not chuſing to apply to him herſelf, left him with Mr. Arnott, and waited for intelligence in the library.

In about an hour after, Mrs. Harrel ran into the room, her tears dried up, and out of breath with joy, and called out, "My deareſt friend, my fate is now all in your hands, and I am ſure you will not refuſe to make me happy."

"What is it I can do for you?" cried Cecilia, dreading ſome impracticable propoſal; "Aſk me not, I beſeech you, what I cannot perform!"

"No, no," anſwered ſhe; "what I aſk requires nothing but good nature. Sir Robert Floyer has been begging Mr. Harrel to leave me behind; and he has promiſed to comply, upon condition you will haſten your marriage, and take me into your own houſe."

"My marriage!" cried the aſtoniſhed Cecilia.

Here they were joined by Mr. Harrel himſelf, who repeated the ſame offer.

"You both amaze and ſhock me!" cried Cecilia; "what is it you mean, and why do you talk to me ſo wildly?"

"Miſs Beverley," cried Mr. Harrel, "it is high time now to give up this reſerve, and trifle no longer with a gentleman ſo unexceptionable as Sir Robert Floyer. The whole town has long acknowledged him as your huſband, and you are every where regarded as his bride; a little frankneſs, therefore, in accepting him, will not only bind him to you for ever, but do credit to the generoſity of your character."

At that moment Sir Robert himſelf burſt into the room, and ſeizing one of her hands, while both of them were uplifted in mute amazement, he preſſed it to his lips, poured forth a volley of ſuch compliments as he had never before prevailed with himſelf to utter, and confidently entreated her to complete his long-attended happineſs, without the cruelty of farther delay.

Cecilia, almoſt petrified by the exceſs of her ſurpriſe, at an attack ſo violent, ſo bold, and apparently ſo ſanguine, was for ſome time ſcarce able to ſpeak or to defend herſelf; but when Sir Robert, preſuming on her ſilence, ſaid ſhe had made him the happieſt of men, ſhe indignantly drew back her hand, and with a look of diſpleaſure that required little explanation, would have walked out of the room; when Mr. Harrel, in a tone of bitterneſs and diſappointment, called out, "Is this lady-like tyranny then never to end?" And Sir Robert, impatiently following her, ſaid, "And is my ſuſpence to endure for ever? After ſo many months attendance—"

"This, indeed, is ſomething too much," ſaid Cecilia, turning back: "You have been kept, Sir, in no ſuſpence; the whole tenor of my conduct has uniformly declared the ſame diſapprobation I at preſent avow, and which my letter, at leaſt, muſt have put beyond all doubt."

"Harrel!" exclaimed Sir Robert, "did not you tell me—"

"Pho, pho," cried Harrel, "what ſignifies calling upon me? I never ſaw in Miſs Beverley any diſapprobation beyond what it is cuſtomary for young ladies of a ſentimental turn to ſhew; and every body knows that where a gentleman is allowed to pay his devoirs for any length of time, no lady intends to uſe him very ſeverely."

"And can you, Mr. Harrel," ſaid Cecilia, "after ſuch converſations as have paſſed between us, perſevere in this wilful miſapprehenſion? But it is in vain to debate where all reaſoning is diſregarded, or to make any proteſtations, where even rejection is received as a favour."

And then, with an air of diſdain, ſhe inſiſted upon paſſing them, and went to her own room.

Mrs. Harrel, however, ſtill followed, and clinging round her, ſtill ſupplicated her pity and compliance.

"What infatuation is this!" cried Cecilia; "is it poſſible that you, too, can ſuppoſe I ever mean to accept Sir Robert?"

"To be ſure I do," anſwered ſhe; "for Mr. Harrel has told me a thouſand times, that however you played the prude, you would be his at laſt."

Cecilia, though doubly irritated againſt Mr. Harrel, was now appeaſed with his lady, whoſe miſtake, however ill founded, offered an excuſe for her behaviour: but ſhe aſſured her in the ſtrongeſt terms, that her repugnance to the Baronet was unalterable, yet told her ſhe might claim from her every good office that was not wholly unreaſonable.

Theſe were words of ſlender comfort to Mrs. Harrel, who well knew that her wiſhes and reaſon had but little affinity, and ſhe ſoon, therefore, left the room.

Cecilia then reſolved to go inſtantly to Mrs. Delvile, acquaint her with the neceſſity of her removal, and make her deciſion whither, according to the manner in which her intelligence ſhould be received.

She ſent, therefore, to order a chair, and was already in the hall, when ſhe was ſtopt by the entrance of Mr. Monckton, who, addreſſing her with a look of haſte and earneſtneſs, ſaid, "I will not aſk whither you are going ſo early, or upon what errand, for I muſt beg a moment's audience, be your buſineſs what it may."

Cecilia then accompanied him to the deſerted breakfaſt-room, which none but the ſervants had this morning entered; and there, graſping her hand, he ſaid, "Miſs Beverley, you muſt fly this houſe directly! it is the region of diſorder and licentiouſneſs, and unfit to contain you."

She aſſured him ſhe was that moment preparing to quit it, but begged he would explain himſelf.

"I have taken care," he anſwered, "for ſome time paſt, to be well informed of all the proceedings of Mr. Harrel; and the intelligence I procured this morning is of the moſt alarming nature. I find he ſpent the night before the laſt entirely at a gaming table, where, intoxicated by a run of good luck, he paſſed the whole of the next day in rioting with his profligate intimates; and laſt night, returning again to his favourite amuſement, he not only loſt all he had gained, but much more than he could pay. Doubt not, therefore, but you will be called upon to aſſiſt him: he ſtill conſiders you as his reſource in times of danger, and while he knows you are under his roof, he will always believe himſelf ſecure."

"Every thing indeed conſpires," ſaid Cecilia, more ſhocked than ſurpriſed at this account, "to make it neceſſary I ſhould quit his houſe: yet I do not think he has at preſent any farther expectations from me, as he came into the room this morning not merely without ſpeaking to me, but behaved with a brutality to Mrs. Harrel that he muſt be certain would give me diſguſt. It ſhewed me, indeed, a new part of his character; for ill as I have long thought of him, I did not ſuſpect he could be guilty of ſuch unmanly cruelty."

"The character of a gameſter," ſaid Mr. Monckton, "depends ſolely upon his luck; his diſpoſition varies with every throw of the dice; and he is airy, gay, and good-humoured, or ſour, moroſe, and ſavage, neither from nature nor from principle, but wholly by the caprice of chance."

Cecilia then related to him the ſcene in which ſhe had juſt been engaged with Sir Robert Floyer.

"This," cried he, "is a *manœuvre* I have been ſome time expecting: but Mr. Harrel, though artful and ſelfiſh, is by no means deep. The plan he had formed would have ſucceeded with ſome women, and he therefore concluded it would with all. So many of your ſex have been ſubdued by perſeverance, and ſo many have been conquered by boldneſs, that he ſuppoſed, when he united two ſuch powerful beſiegers in the perſon of a Baronet, he ſhould vanquiſh all obſtacle. By aſſuring you that the world thought the marriage already ſettled, he hoped to ſurpriſe you into believing there was no help for it, and by the ſuddenneſs and vehemence of the attack, to frighten and hurry you into compliance. His own wife, he knew, might have been managed thus with eaſe, and ſo, probably, might his ſiſter, and his mother, and his couſin; for in love matters, or what are ſo called, women in general are readily duped. He diſcerned not the ſuperiority of your underſtanding to tricks ſo ſhallow and impertinent, nor the firmneſs of your mind in maintaining its own independence. No doubt but he was amply to have been rewarded for his aſſiſtance; and probably had you this morning been propitious, the Baronet in return was to have cleared him from his preſent difficulty."

"Even in my own mind," ſaid Cecilia, "I can no longer defend him; for he could never have been ſo eager to promote the intereſt of Sir Robert, in the preſent terrible ſituation of his own affairs, had he not been ſtimulated by ſome ſecret motives. His ſchemes and his artifices, however, will now be utterly loſt upon me, ſince your warning and advice, aided by my own ſuffering experience of the inutility of all I can do for him, will effectually guard me from all his future attempts."

"Reſt no ſecurity upon yourſelf," ſaid Mr. Monckton, "ſince you have no knowledge of the many tricks and inventions by which you may be plundered. Perhaps he may beg permiſſion to reſide in your houſe in Suffolk, or deſire an annuity for his wife, or chuſe to receive your firſt rents when you come of age; and whatever he may fix upon, his dagger and his bowl will not fail to procure him. A heart ſo liberal as yours can only be guarded by flight. You were going, you ſaid, when I came—and whither?"

"To—to St. James's-Square," anſwered ſhe, with a deep bluſh.

"Indeed!—is young Delvile, then, going abroad?"

"Abroad?—no,—I believe not."

"Nay, I only imagined it from your chuſing to reſide in his houſe."

"I do not chuſe it," cried Cecilia, with quickneſs; "but is not any thing preferable to dwelling with Mr. Briggs?"

"Certainly," ſaid Mr. Monckton, coolly; "nor ſhould I have ſuppoſed he had any chance with you, had I not hitherto obſerved that your convenience has always been ſacrificed to your ſenſe of propriety."

Cecilia, touched by praiſe ſo full of cenſure, and earneſt to vindicate her delicacy, after an internal ſtruggle, which Mr. Monckton was too ſubtle to interrupt, proteſted ſhe would go inſtantly to Mr. Briggs, and ſee if it were poſſible to be ſettled in his houſe, before ſhe made any attempt to fix herſelf elſewhere.

"And when?" ſaid Mr. Monckton.

"I don't know," anſwered ſhe, with ſome heſitation, "perhaps this afternoon."

"Why not this morning?"

"I can go out no where this morning; I muſt ſtay with Mrs. Harrel."

"You thought otherwiſe when I came; you were then content to leave her."

Cecilia's alacrity, however, for changing her abode, was now at an end, and ſhe would fain have been left quietly to re-conſider her plans: but Mr. Monckton urged ſo ſtrongly the danger of her lengthened ſtay in the houſe of ſo deſigning a man as Mr. Harrel, that he prevailed with her to quit it without delay, and had himſelf the ſatisfaction of handing her to her chair.

CHAP. II.

A Miser's Mansion.

MR. Briggs was at home, and Cecilia inſtantly and briefly informed him that it was inconvenient for her to live any longer at Mr. Harrel's, and that if ſhe could be accommodated at his houſe, ſhe ſhould be glad to reſide with him during the reſt of her minority.

"Shall, ſhall," cried he, extremely pleaſed, "take you with all my heart. Warrant maſter Harrel's made a good penny of you. Not a bit the better for dreſſing ſo fine; many a rogue in a gold lace hat."

Cecilia begged to know what apartments he could ſpare for her.

"Take you up ſtairs," cried he; "ſhew you a place for a queen."

He then led her up ſtairs, and took her to a room entirely dark, and ſo cloſe for want of air, that ſhe could hardly breathe in it. She retreated to the landing-place till he had opened the ſhutters, and then ſaw an apartment the moſt forlorn ſhe had ever beheld, containing no other furniture than a ragged ſtuff bed, two worn-out ruſh-bottomed chairs, an old wooden box, and a bit of broken glaſs which was faſtened to the wall by two bent nails.

"See here, my little chick," cried he, "every thing ready! and a box for your gimcracks into the bargain."

"You don't mean this place for me, Sir!" cried Cecilia, ſtaring.

"Do, do," cried he; "a deal nicer by and by. Only wants a little furbiſhing: ſoon put to rights. Never ſweep a room out of uſe; only wears out brooms for nothing."

"But Sir, can I not have an apartment on the firſt floor?"

"No, no, ſomething elſe to do with it; belongs to the club; ſecrets in all things! Make this do well enough. Come again next week; wear quite a new face. Nothing wanting but a table; pick you up one at a broker's."

"But I am obliged, Sir, to leave Mr. Harrel's houſe directly."

"Well, well, make ſhift without a table at firſt; no great matter if you ha'n't one at all, nothing particular to do with it. Want another blanket, though. Know where to get one; a very good broker hard by. Underſtand how to deal with him! A cloſe dog, but warm."

"I have alſo two ſervants, Sir," ſaid Cecilia.

"Won't have 'em! Sha'n't come! Eat me out of houſe and home.

"Whatever they eat, Sir," anſwered ſhe, "will be wholly at my expence, as will every thing elſe that belongs to them."

"Better get rid of them: hate ſervants; all a pack of rogues; think of nothing but ſtuffing and guttling."

Then opening another door, "See here," he cried, "my own room juſt by; ſnug as a church!"

Cecilia, following him into it, loſt a great part of her ſurpriſe at the praiſe he had laviſhed upon that which he deſtined for herſelf, by perceiving that his own was yet more ſcantily furniſhed, having nothing in it but a miſerable bed without any curtains, and a large cheſt, which while it contained his clothes, ſufficed both for table and chair.

"What are doing here?" cried he angrily, to a maid who was making the bed; "can't you take more care? beat out all the feathers; ſee! two on the ground; nothing but waſte and extravagance! never mind how ſoon a man's ruined. Come to want, you ſlut, ſee that, come to want!"

"I can never want more than I do here," ſaid the girl, "ſo that's one comfort."

Cecilia now began to repent ſhe had made known the purport of her viſit, for ſhe found it would be utterly impoſſible to accommodate either her mind or her perſon to a reſidence ſuch as was here to be obtained: and ſhe only wiſhed Mr. Monckton had been preſent, that he might himſelf be convinced of the impracticability of his ſcheme. Her whole buſineſs, therefore, now, was to retract her offer, and eſcape from the houſe.

"I ſee, Sir," ſaid ſhe, when he turned from his ſervant, "that I cannot be received here without inconvenience, and therefore I will make ſome new arrangement in my plan."

"No, no," cried he, "like to have you, 'tis but fair, all in our turn; won't be chouſed: Maſter Harrel's had his ſhare. Sorry could not get you that ſweet-heart! would not bite; ſoon find out another; never fret."

"But there are ſo many things with which I cannot poſſibly diſpenſe," ſaid Cecilia, "that I am certain my removing hither would occaſion you far more trouble than you at preſent foreſee."

"No, no; get all in order ſoon: go about myſelf; know how to bid; underſtand trap; always go ſhabby; no making a bargain in a good coat. Look ſharp at the goods; ſay they won't do; come away; ſend ſomebody elſe for 'em. Never go twice myſelf; nothing got cheap if one ſeems to have a hankering."

"But I am ſure it is not poſſible," ſaid Cecilia, hurrying down ſtairs, "that my room, and one for each of my ſervants, ſhould be ready in time."

"Yes, yes," cried he, following her, "ready in a trice. Make a little ſhift at firſt; double the blanket till we get another; lie with the maid a night or two; never ſtand for a trifle."

And, when ſhe was ſeated in her chair, the whole time diſclaiming her intention of returning, he only pinched her cheek with a facetious ſmirk, and ſaid, "By, by, little duck; come again ſoon. Warrant I'll have the room ready. Sha'n't half know it again; make it as ſmart as a carrot."

And then ſhe left the houſe; fully ſatisfied that no one could blame her refuſing to inhabit it, and much leſs chagrined than ſhe was willing to ſuppoſe herſelf, in finding ſhe had now no reſource but in the Delviles.

Yet, in her ſerious reflections, ſhe could not but think herſelf ſtrangely unfortunate that the guardian with whom alone it ſeemed proper for her to reſide, ſhould by parſimony, vulgarity, and meanneſs, render riches contemptible, proſperity unavailing, and œconomy odious: and that the choice of her uncle ſhould thus unhappily have fallen upon the loweſt and moſt wretched of miſers, in a city abounding with opulence, hoſpitality, and ſplendour, and of which the principal inhabitants, long eminent for their wealth and their probity, were now almoſt univerſally riſing in elegance and liberality.

CHAP. III.

A DECLARATION.

CECILIA's next progreſs, therefore, was to St. James's-Square, whither ſhe went in the utmoſt anxiety, from her uncertainty of the reception with which her propoſal would meet.

The ſervants informed her that Mr. and Mrs. Delvile were at breakfaſt, and that the Duke of Derwent and his two daughters were with them.

Before ſuch witneſſes to relate the reaſons of her leaving the Harrels was impoſſible; and from ſuch a party to ſend for Mr. Delvile, would, by her ſtately guardian, be deemed an indecorum unpardonable. She was obliged, therefore, to return to Portman-Square, in order to open her cauſe in a letter to Mrs. Delvile.

Mr. Arnott, flying inſtantly to meet her, called out, "O madam, what alarm has your abſence occaſioned! My ſiſter believed ſhe ſhould ſee you no more, Mr. Harrel feared a premature diſcovery of his purpoſed retreat, and we have all been under the cruelleſt apprehenſions leſt you meant not to come back."

"I am ſorry I ſpoke not with you before I went out," ſaid Cecilia, accompanying him to the library, "but I thought you were all too much occupied to miſs me. I have been, indeed, preparing for a removal, but I meant not to leave your ſiſter without bidding her adieu, nor, indeed, to quit any part of the family with ſo little ceremony. Is Mr. Harrel ſtill firm to his laſt plan?"

"I fear ſo! I have tried what is poſſible to diſſuade him, and my poor ſiſter has wept without ceaſing. Indeed, if ſhe will take no conſolation, I believe I ſhall do what ſhe pleaſes, for I cannot bear the ſight of her in ſuch diſtreſs."

"You are too generous, and too good!" ſaid Cecilia, "and I know not how, while flying from danger myſelf, to forbear counſelling you to avoid it alſo."

"Ah, madam!" cried he, "the greateſt danger for *me* is what I have now no power to run from!"

Cecilia, though ſhe could not but underſtand him, felt not the leſs his friend for knowing him the humbleſt of her admirers; and as ſhe ſaw the threatening ruin to which his too great tenderneſs expoſed him, ſhe kindly ſaid, "Mr. Arnott, I will ſpeak to you without reſerve. It is not difficult to ſee that the deſtruction which awaits Mr. Harrel, is ready alſo to enſnare his brother in law; but let not that blindneſs to the fear which we have ſo often lamented for him, hereafter be lamented for yourſelf. Till his preſent connexions are broken, and his way of living is changed, nothing can be done for him, and whatever you were to advance, would merely be ſunk at the gaming table. Reſerve, therefore, your liberality till it may indeed be of ſervice to him, for believe me, at preſent, his mind is as much injured as his fortune."

"And is it poſſible, madam," ſaid Mr. Arnott, in an accent of ſurpriſe and delight, "that you can deign to be intereſted in what may become of *me!* and that *my* ſharing or eſcaping the ruin of this houſe is not wholly indifferent to you?"

"Certainly not," anſwered Cecilia; "as the brother of my earlieſt friend, I can never be inſenſible to your welfare."

"Ah, madam!" cried he, "as her brother! ——— O that there were any other tie!—"

"Think a little," ſaid Cecilia, preparing to quit the room, "of what I have mentioned, and, for your ſiſter's ſake, be firm now, if you will be kind hereafter."

"I will be any and every thing," cried he, "that Miſs Beverley will command."

Cecilia, fearful of any miſinterpretation, then came back, and gravely ſaid, "No, Sir, be ruled only by your own judgment: or, ſhould my advice have any weight with [illegible] it is given from the moſt diſintereſted motives, and with no other view, than that of ſecuring your power to be of ſervice to your ſiſter."

"For that ſiſter's ſake, then, have the goodneſs to hear my ſituation, and honour me with farther directions."

"You will make me fear to ſpeak," ſaid Cecilia, "if you give ſo much conſequence to my opinion. I have ſeen, however, nothing in your conduct I have ever wiſhed changed, except too little attention to your own intereſt and affairs."

"Ah!" cried he, "with what rapture ſhould I hear thoſe words, could I but imagine——"

"Come, come," ſaid Cecilia, ſmiling, "no digreſſion! You called me back to talk of your ſiſter; if you change your ſubject, perhaps you may loſe your auditor."

"I would not, madam, for the world encroach upon your goodneſs; the favour I have found has indeed always exceeded my expectations, as it has always ſurpaſſed my deſerts; yet has it never blinded me to my own unworthineſs. Do not, then, fear to indulge me with your converſation; I ſhall draw from it no inference but of pity, and though pity from Miſs Beverley is the ſweeteſt balm to my heart, it ſhall never ſeduce me to the encouragement of higher hopes."

Cecilia had long had reaſon to expect ſuch a de-a declaration, yet ſhe heard it with unaffected concern, and looking at him with the utmoſt gentleneſs, ſaid, "Mr. Arnott, your regard does me honour, and, were it ſomewhat more rational, would give me pleaſure; take, then, from it what is more than I wiſh or merit, and, while you preſerve the reſt, be aſſured it will be faithfully returned."

"Your rejection is ſo mild," cried he, "that I, who had no hope of acceptance, find relief in having at laſt told my ſufferings. Could I but continue to ſee you every day, and to be bleſt with your converſation, I think I ſhould be happy, and I am ſure I ſhould be grateful."

"You are already," anſwered ſhe, ſhaking her head, and moving towards the door, "infringing the conditions upon which our friendſhip is to be founded."

"Do not go, madam," he cried, "till I have done what you have juſt promiſed to permit, acquainted you with my ſituation, and been honoured with your advice. I muſt own to you, then, that 5000*l.* which I had in the ſtocks, as well as a conſiderable ſum in a banker's hands, I have parted with, as I now find for ever: but I have no heart for refuſal, nor would my ſiſter at this moment be thus diſtreſſed, but that I have nothing more to give without I cut down my trees, or ſell ſome farm, ſince all I was worth, except my landed property, is already gone.

What, therefore, I can now do to ſave Mr. Harrel from this deſperate expedition I know not."

"I am ſorry," ſaid Cecilia, "to ſpeak with ſeverity of one ſo nearly connected with you; yet, ſuffer me to aſk, why ſhould he be ſaved from it at all? and what is there he can at preſent do better? Has not he long been threatened with every evil that is now arrived? have we not both warned him, and have not the clamours of his creditors aſſailed him? yet what has been the conſequence? he has not ſubmitted to the ſmalleſt change in his way of life, he has not denied himſelf a ſingle indulgence, nor ſpared any expence, nor thought of any reformation. Luxury has followed luxury, and he has only grown fonder of extravagance, as extravagance has become more dangerous. Till the preſent ſtorm, therefore, blows over, leave him to his fate, and when a calm ſucceeds, I will myſelf, for the ſake of Priſcilla, aid you to ſave what is poſſible of the wreck."

"All you ſay, madam, is as wiſe as it is good, and now I am acquainted with your opinion, I will wholly new model myſelf upon it, and grow as ſteady againſt all attacks as hitherto I have been yielding."

Cecilia was then retiring; but again detaining her, he ſaid, "You ſpoke, madam, of a removal, and indeed it is high time you ſhould quit this ſcene; yet I hope you intend not to go till to-morrow,' as Mr. Harrel has declared your leaving him ſooner will be his deſtruction."

"Heaven forbid," ſaid Cecilia, "for I mean to be gone with all the ſpeed in my power."

"Mr. Harrel," anſwered he, "did not explain himſelf; but I believe he apprehends your deſerting his houſe at this critical time, will raiſe a ſuſpicion of his own deſign of going abroad, and make his creditors interfere to prevent him."

"To what a wretched ſtate," cried Cecilia, "has he reduced himſelf! I will not, however, be the voluntary inſtrument of his diſgrace; and if you think my ſtay is ſo material to his ſecurity, I will continue here till to-morrow morning."

Mr. Arnott almoſt wept his thanks for this conceſſion, and Cecilia, happy in making it to him inſtead of Mr. Harrel, then went to her own room, and wrote the following letter to Mrs. Delvile.

To the Hon. Mrs. DELVILE, St. James's-Square.

Dear Madam,

Portman-ſquare, June 12.

I AM willing to hope you have been rather ſurpriſed that I have not ſooner availed myſelf of the permiſſion with which you yeſterday

day honoured me of ſpending this whole day with you, but, unfortunately for myſelf, I am prevented waiting upon you even for any part of it. Do not, however, think me now ungrateful if I ſtay away, nor to morrow impertinent, if I venture to enquire whether that apartment which you had once the goodneſs to appropriate to my uſe, may then again be ſpared for me! The accidents which have prompted this ſtrange requeſt will, I truſt, be ſufficient apology for the liberty I take in making it, when I have the honour to ſee you, and acquaint you what they are. I am with the utmoſt reſpect,

Dear Madam,
your moſt obedient,
humble ſervant,
CECILIA BEVERLEY.

She would not have been thus conciſe, had not the caution of Mr. Arnott made her fear, in the preſent perilous ſituation of affairs, to truſt the ſecret of Mr. Harrel to paper.

The following anſwer was returned her from Mrs. Delvile.

To Miſs BEVERLEY, Portman-Square.

THE accidents you mention, are not, I hope, of a very ſerious nature, ſince I ſhall find difficulty inſurmountable in trying to lament them, if they are productive of a lengthened viſit from my dear Miſs Beverley to her

Faithful humble Servant,
AUGUSTA DELVILE.

Cecilia, charmed with this note, could now no longer forbear looking forward to brighter proſpects, flattering herſelf that once under the roof of Mrs. Delvile, ſhe muſt neceſſarily be happy, let the engagements or behaviour of her ſon be what they might.

CHAP. IV.

A GAMESTER'S CONSCIENCE.

FROM this ſoothing proſpect, Cecilia was preſently diſturbed by Mrs. Harrel's maid, who came to entreat ſhe would haſten to her lady, whom ſhe feared was going into fits.

Cecilia flew to her immediately, and found her in the moſt violent affliction. She uſed every kind effort in her power to quiet and conſole her, but it was not without the utmoſt difficulty ſhe could ſob out the cauſe of this freſh ſorrow, which indeed was not trifling. Mr. Harrel, ſhe ſaid, had told her he could not poſſibly raiſe money even for his travelling expences, without riſking a diſcovery of his project, and being ſeized by his creditors: he had therefore charged her, *thro' her brother, or her friend*, to procure for him 3000*l*. as leſs would not ſuffice to maintain them while abroad, and he knew no method by which he could have any remittances without danger. And, when ſhe heſitated in her compliance, he furiouſly accuſed her of having brought on all this diſtreſs by her negligence and want of management, and declared, that if ſhe did not get the money, ſhe would only be ſerved as ſhe merited by ſtarving in a foreign gaol, which he ſwore would be the fate of them both.

The horror and indignation with which Cecilia heard this account were unſpeakable. She ſaw evidently that ſhe was again to be played upon by terror and diſtreſs, and the cautions and opinions of Mr. Monckton no longer appeared overſtrained; *one year's income* was already demanded, the annuity and the country houſe might next be required: ſhe rejoiced, however, that thus wiſely forewarned, ſhe was not liable to ſurpriſe; and ſhe determined, be their entreaties or repreſentations what they might, to be immoveably ſteady in her purpoſe of leaving them the next morning.

Yet ſhe could not but grieve at ſuffering the whole burthen of this clamorous impoſition to fall upon the ſoft-hearted Mr. Arnott, whoſe inability to reſiſt ſolicitation made him ſo unequal to ſuſtaining its weight: but when Mrs. Harrel was again able to go on with her account, ſhe heard, to her infinite ſurpriſe, that all application to her brother had proved fruitleſs. "He will not hear me," continued Mrs. Harrel, "and he never was deaf to me before! ſo now I have loſt my only and laſt reſource, my brother himſelf gives me up, and there is no one elſe upon earth who will aſſiſt me!"

"With pleaſure, with readineſs, with joy," cried Cecilia, "ſhould you find aſſiſtance from me, were it to you alone it were given; but to ſupply fuel for the very fire that is conſuming you—no, no, my whole heart is hardened againſt gaming and gameſters, and neither now or ever will I ſuffer any conſideration to ſoften me in their favour."

Mrs. Harrel only anſwered by tears and lamentations; and Cecilia, whoſe juſtice ſhut not out compaſſion, having now declared her purpoſed firmneſs, again attempted to ſooth her, entreating her not to give way to ſuch immoderate grief, ſince better proſpects might ariſe from the very gloom now before her; and a ſhort time ſpent in ſolitude and oeconomy, might enable her to return to her native land with recovered happineſs.

"No, I ſhall never return!" cried ſhe, weeping, "I ſhall die, I ſhall break my heart before I have been baniſhed a month! Oh Miſs Beverley, how happy are you! able to ſtay where you pleaſe,—rich,—rolling in wealth which you do not want—of which had we but *one* year's income only, all this miſery would be over, and we might ſtay in our dear, dear country!"

Cecilia, ſtruck by a hint that ſo nearly bordered upon reproach, and offended by ſeeing the impoſſibility of ever doing enough, while any thing remained to be done, forbore not without difficulty enquiring what next was expected from her, and whether any part of her fortune might be guarded, without giving room for ſome cenſure! but the deep affliction of Mrs. Harrel ſoon removed her reſentment, and ſcarcely thinking her, while in a ſtate of ſuch wretchedneſs, anſwerable for what ſhe ſaid, after a little recollection, ſhe mildly replied, "As affluence is all comparative, you may at preſent think I have more than my ſhare: but the time is only this moment paſt, when your own ſituation ſeemed as ſubject to the envy of others as mine may be now. My future deſtiny is yet undetermined; and the occaſion I may have for my fortune is unknown to myſelf; but whether I poſſeſs it in peace or in turbulence, whether it proves to me a bleſſing or an injury, ſo long as I can call it my own, I ſhall always remember with alacrity the claim upon that and upon me which early friendſhip has ſo juſtly given Mrs. Harrel. Yet permit me, at the ſame time, to add, that I do not hold myſelf ſo entirely independent as you may probably ſuppoſe me. I have not, it is true, any relations to call me to account, but reſpect for their memory ſupplies the place of their authority, and I cannot, in the diſtribution of the fortune which has devolved to me, forbear ſometimes conſidering how they would have wiſhed it ſhould be ſpent, and always remembering that what was acquired by induſtry and labour, ſhould never be diſſipated in idleneſs and vanity. Forgive me for thus ſpeaking to the point; you will not find me leſs friendly to yourſelf, for this frankneſs with reſpect to your ſituation."

Tears were again the only anſwer of Mrs. Harrel; yet Cecilia, who pitied the weakneſs of her mind, ſtayed by her with the moſt patient kindneſs till the ſervants announced dinner. She then declared ſhe would not go down ſtairs: but Cecilia ſo ſtrongly repreſented the danger of awakening ſuſpicion in the ſervants, that ſhe at laſt prevailed with her to make her appearance.

Mr. Harrel was already in the parlour, and enquiring for Mr. Arnott, but was told by the ſervants he had ſent word he had another engagement. Sir Robert Floyer alſo kept away, and, for the firſt time ſince her arrival in town, Cecilia dined with no other company than the maſter and miſtreſs of the houſe.

Mrs. Harrel could eat nothing; Cecilia, merely to avoid creating ſurpriſe in the ſervants, forbore following her example; but Mr. Harrel eat as much as uſual, talked all dinner time, was extremely civil to Cecilia, and diſcovered not by his manners the leaſt alteration in his affairs.

When the ſervants were gone, he deſired his wife to ſtep for a moment with him into the library. They ſoon returned, and then Mr. Harrel, after walking in a diſordered manner about the room, rang the bell, and ordered his hat and cane, and as he took them, ſaid "If this fails—" and, ſtopping ſhort, without ſpeaking to his wife, or even bowing to Cecilia, he haſtily went out of the houſe.

Mrs. Harrel told Cecilia that he had merely called her to know the event of her two petitions, and had heard her double failure in total ſilence. Whither he was now gone it was not eaſy to conjecture, nor what was the new reſource which he ſtill ſeemed to think worth trying; but the manner of his quitting the houſe, and the threat implied by *if this fails*, contributed not to leſſen the grief of Mrs. Harrel, and gave to Cecilia herſelf the utmoſt alarm.

They continued together till tea-time, the ſervants having been ordered to admit no company. Mr. Harrel himſelf then returned, and returned, to the amazement of Cecilia, accompanied by Mr. Marriot.

He preſented that young man to both the ladies as a gentleman whoſe acquaintance and friendſhip he was very deſirous to cultivate. Mrs. Harrel, too much abſorbed in her own affairs to care about any other, ſaw his entrance with a momentary ſurpriſe, and then thought of it no more: but it was not ſo with Cecilia, whoſe better underſtanding led her to deeper reflection.

Even the viſits of Mr. Marriot but a few weeks ſince Mr. Harrel had prohibited; yet he now introduced him into his houſe with particular diſtinction; he came back too himſelf in admirable ſpirits, enlivened in his countenance, and reſtored to his good humour. A change ſo extraordinary both in conduct and diſpoſition, convinced her that ſome change no leſs extraordinary of circumſtance muſt previouſly have happened: what that might be it was not poſſible for her to divine, but the leſſons ſhe had received from Mr. Monckton led her to ſuſpicions of the darkeſt kind.

Every part of his behaviour ſerved ſtill farther to confirm them; he was civil even to exceſs to Mr. Marriot; he gave orders aloud not to be at home to Sir Robert Floyer; he made his court to Cecilia with unuſual aſſiduity; and he took every method in his power to procure opportunity to her admirer of addreſſing and approaching her.

The young man, who ſeemed *enamoured even to madneſs*, could ſcarce refrain not merely from proſtration to the object of his paſſion, but to Mr. Harrel himſelf for permitting him to ſee her. Cecilia, who not without ſome concern, perceived a fondneſs ſo fruitleſs, and who knew not by what arts or with what views Mr. Harrel might think proper to encourage it, determined to take all the means that were in her own power towards giving it immediate controul. She behaved, therefore, with the utmoſt reſerve, and the moment tea was over, though earneſtly entreated to remain with them, ſhe retired to her own room, without making any other apology than coldly ſaying ſhe could not ſtay.

In about an hour Mrs. Harrel ran up ſtairs to her.

"Oh, Miſs Beverley," ſhe cried, "a little reſpite is now granted me! Mr. Harrel ſays he ſhall ſtay another day; he ſays, too, one ſingle thouſand pound would now make him a new man."

Cecilia returned no anſwer; ſhe conjectured ſome new deceit was in agitation to raiſe money, and ſhe feared Mr. Marriot was the next dupe to be played upon.

Mrs. Harrel, therefore, with a look of the utmoſt diſappointment, left her, ſaying ſhe would ſend for her brother, and once more try if he had yet any remaining regard for her.

Cecilia reſted quiet till eleven o'clock, when ſhe was ſummoned to ſupper: ſhe found Mr. Marriot ſtill the only gueſt, and that Mr. Arnott made not his appearance.

She now reſolved to publiſh her reſolution of going the next morning to St. James's-Square. As ſoon, therefore, as the ſervants withdrew, ſhe enquired of Mr. Harrel if he had any commands with Mr. or Mrs. Delvile, as ſhe ſhould ſee them the next morning, and purpoſed to ſpend ſome time with them.

Mr. Harrel, with a look of much alarm, aſked if ſhe meant the whole day.

Many days, ſhe anſwered, and probably ſome months.

Mrs. Harrel exclaimed her ſurpriſe aloud, and Mr. Harrel looked aghaſt, while his new young friend caſt upon him a glance of reproach and reſentment, which fully convinced Cecilia he imagined he had procured himſelf a title to an eaſineſs of intercourſe and frequency of meeting which this intelligence deſtroyed.

Cecilia, thinking, after all that had paſſed, no other ceremony on her part was neceſſary but that of ſimply ſpeaking her intention, then aroſe and returned to her own room.

She acquainted her maid that ſhe was going to make a viſit to Mrs. Delvile, and gave her directions about packing up her clothes, and ſending for a man in the morning to take care of her books.

This employment was ſoon interrupted by the entrance of Mrs. Harrel, who deſiring to ſpeak with her alone, when the maid was gone, ſaid "O, Miſs Beverley, can you indeed be ſo barbarous as to leave me?"

"I entreat you, Mrs. Harrel," anſwered Cecilia, "to ſave both yourſelf and me any farther diſcuſſion. I have delayed this removal very long, and I can now delay it no longer."

Mrs. Harrel then flung herſelf upon a chair in the bittereſt ſorrow, declaring ſhe was utterly undone; that Mr. Harrel had declared he could not ſtay even an hour in England if ſhe was not in his houſe; that he had already had a violent quarrel with Mr. Marriot upon the ſubject; and that her brother, though ſhe had ſent him the moſt earneſt entreaties, would not come near her.

Cecilia, tired of vain attempts to offer comfort, now urged the warmeſt expoſtulations againſt her oppoſition, ſtrongly repreſenting the real neceſſity of her going abroad, and the unpardonable weakneſs of wiſhing to continue ſuch a life as ſhe now led, adding debt to debt, and hoarding diſtreſs upon diſtreſs.

Mrs. Harrel then, though rather from compulſion than conviction, declared ſhe would agree to go, if ſhe had not a dread of ill uſage; but Mr. Harrel, ſhe ſaid, had behaved to her with the utmoſt brutality, calling her the cauſe of his ruin, and threatening that if ſhe procured not this thouſand pound before the enſuing evening, ſhe ſhould be treated as ſhe deſerved for her extravagance and folly.

"Does he think, then," ſaid Cecilia, with the utmoſt indignation, "that I am to be frightened through your fears into what compliances he pleaſes?"

"O no," cried Mrs. Harrel, "no; his expectations are all from my brother. He ſurely thought that, when I ſupplicated and pleaded to him, he would do what I wiſhed, for ſo he always did formerly, and ſo once again I am ſure he will do now, could I but make him come to me, and tell him how I am uſed, and tell him that if Mr. Harrel takes me abroad in this humour, I verily think in his rage he will half murder me."

Cecilia, who well knew ſhe was herſelf the real cauſe of Mr. Arnott's reſiſtance, now felt her reſolution waver, internally reproaching herſelf with the ſufferings of his ſiſter; alarmed, however, for her own conſtancy, ſhe earneſtly beſought Mrs. Harrel to go and compoſe herſelf for the night, and promiſed to deliberate what could be done for her before morning.

Mrs. Harrel complied: but ſcarce was her own reſt was more broken than that of Cecilia, who, though extremely fatigued with a whole night's watching, was ſo perturbed in her mind ſhe could not cloſe her eyes. Mrs. Harrel was her earlieſt, and had once been her deareſt friend; ſhe had deprived her by her own advice of her cuſtomary refuge in her brother; to refuſe, therefore, aſſiſtance, to her ſeemed cruelty, though to deny it to Mr. Harrel was juſtice: ſhe endeavoured, therefore, to make a compromiſe between her judgment and compaſſion, by reſolving that though ſhe would grant nothing farther to Mr. Harrel while he remained in London, ſhe would contribute from time to time both to his neceſſities and comfort, when once he was eſtabliſhed elſewhere upon ſome plan of prudence and œconomy.

CHAP. V.

A PERSECUTION.

THE next morning by five o'clock Mrs. Harrel came into Cecilia's room to know the reſult of her deliberation, and Cecilia, with that graceful readineſs which accompanied all her kind offices, inſtantly aſſured her the thouſand pound ſhould be her own, if ſhe would conſent to ſeek ſome quiet retreat, and receive it in ſmall ſums, of fifty or one hundred pounds at a time, which ſhould be carefully tranſmitted, and which, by being delivered to herſelf, might ſecure better treatment from Mr. Harrel, and be a motive to revive his care and affection.

She flew, much delighted, with this propoſal to her huſband; but preſently, and with a dejected look, returning, ſaid Mr. Harrel proteſted he could not poſſibly ſet out without firſt receiving the money. "I ſhall go myſelf, therefore," ſaid ſhe, "to my brother after breakfaſt, for he will not, I ſee, unkind as he is grown, come to me; and if I do not ſucceed with him, I believe I ſhall never come back!"

To this Cecilia, offended and diſappointed, anſwered, "I am ſorry for Mr. Arnott, but for myſelf I have done!"

Mrs. Harrel then left her, and ſhe aroſe to make immediate preparations for her removal to St. James's-Square, whither, with all the ſpeed in her power, ſhe ſent her books, her trunks, and all that belonged to her.

When ſhe was ſummoned down ſtairs, ſhe found, for the firſt time, Mr. Harrel breakfaſting at the ſame table with his wife: they ſeemed mutually out of humour and comfortleſs; nothing hardly was ſpoken, and little ſhe was ſwallowed: Mr. Harrel, however, was civil, but his wife was totally ſilent, and Cecilia the whole time was planning how to take her leave.

When the tea things were removed, Mr. Harrel ſaid, "You have not, I hope, Miſs Beverley, quite determined upon this ſtrange ſcheme?"

"Indeed I have, Sir," ſhe anſwered, "and already I have ſent my clothes."

At this information he ſeemed thunderſtruck; but, after ſomewhat recovering, ſaid with much bitterneſs, "Well, madam, at leaſt may I requeſt you will ſtay here till the evening?"

"No, Sir," anſwered ſhe coolly, "I am going inſtantly."

"And will you not," ſaid he, with yet greater aſperity, "amuſe yourſelf firſt with ſeeing bailiffs take poſſeſſion of my houſe, and your friend Priſcilla follow me to jail?"

"Good God, Mr. Harrel!" exclaimed Cecilia, with uplifted hands, "is this a queſtion, is this behaviour I have merited!"

"Oh no!" cried he with quickneſs, "ſhould I once think that way ——" then riſing and ſtriking his forehead, he walked about the room.

Mrs. Harrel aroſe too, and weeping violently went away.

"Will you at leaſt," ſaid Cecilia, when

ſhe was gone; "till your affairs are ſettled, leave Priſcilla with me? When I go into my own houſe, ſhe ſhall accompany me, and mean time Mr. Arnott's I am ſure will gladly be open to her."

"No, no," anſwered he, "ſhe deſerves no ſuch indulgence; ſhe has not any reaſon to complain; ſhe has been as negligent, as profuſe, as expenſive as myſelf; ſhe has practiſed neither œconomy nor ſelf-denial, ſhe has neither thought of me nor my affairs, nor is ſhe now afflicted at any thing but the loſs of that affluence ſhe has done her beſt towards diminiſhing."

"All recrimination," ſaid Cecilia, "were vain, or what might not Mrs. Harrel urge in return! but let us not enlarge upon ſo ungrateful a ſubject, the wiſeſt and the happieſt ſcheme now were mutually and kindly to conſole each other."

"Conſolation and kindneſs," cried he, with abruptneſs, "are out of the queſtion. I have ordered a poſt chaiſe to be here at night, and if till then you will ſtay, I will promiſe to releaſe you without farther petition; if not, eternal deſtruction be my portion if I *live* to ſee the ſcene which your removal will occaſion!"

"My removal!" cried Cecilia, ſhuddering, "good heaven, and how can my removal be of ſuch dreadful conſequence?"

"Aſk me not," cried he fiercely, "queſtions or reaſons now; the criſis is at hand; and you will ſoon, happen what may, know all: mean time, what I have ſaid is a fact, and immutable: and you muſt haſten my end, or give me a chance for avoiding it, as you think fit. I ſcarce care at this inſtant which way you decide: remember, however, all I aſk of you is to defer your departure; what elſe I have to hope is from Mr. Arnott."

He then left the room.

Cecilia now was again a coward! In vain ſhe called to her ſupport the advice, the propheſies, the cautions of Mr. Monckton, in vain ſhe recollected the impoſitions ſhe had already ſeen practiſed, for neither the warnings of her counſellor, nor the leſſons of her own experience, were proofs againſt the terrors which threats ſo deſperate inſpired; and though more than once ſhe determined to fly at all events from a tyranny he had ſo little right to uſurp, the mere remembrance of the words *if you ſtay not till night I will not live*, robbed her of all courage; and however long ſhe had prepared herſelf for this very attack, when the moment arrived, its power over her mind was too ſtrong for reſiſtance.

While this conflict between fear and reſolution was ſtill undecided, her ſervant brought her the following letter from Mr. Arnott.

To Miſs Beverley, Portman-Square.

Madam, June 13th, 1779.

Determined to obey thoſe commands which you had the goodneſs to honour me with, I have abſented myſelf from town till Mr. Harrel is ſettled; for though I am as ſenſible of your wiſdom as of your beauty, I find myſelf too weak to bear the diſtreſs of my unhappy ſiſter, and therefore I run from the ſight, nor ſhall any letter or meſſage follow me, unleſs it comes from Miſs Beverley herſelf, leſt ſhe ſhould in future refuſe the only favour I dare preſume to ſolicit, that of ſometimes deigning to honour with her directions

The moſt humble
and devoted of her ſervants,
J. Arnott.

In the midſt of her apprehenſions for herſelf and her own intereſt, Cecilia could not forbear rejoicing that Mr. Arnott, at leaſt, had eſcaped the preſent ſtorm: yet ſhe was certain it would fall the more heavily upon herſelf, and dreaded the ſight of Mrs. Harrel after the ſhock which this flight would occaſion.

Her expectations were but too quickly fulfilled: Mrs. Harrel in a ſhort time after ruſhed wildly into the room, calling out, "My brother is gone! he has left me for ever!—Oh ſave me, Miſs Beverley, ſave me from abuſe and inſult!" And ſhe wept with ſo much violence ſhe could utter nothing more.

Cecilia, quite tortured by this perſecution, faintly aſked what ſhe could do for her?

"Send," cried ſhe, "to my brother, and beſeech him not to abandon me! ſend to him and conjure him to advance this thouſand pound!—the chaiſe is already ordered,—Mr. Harrel is fixed upon going,—yet he ſays, without that money we muſt both ſtarve in a ſtrange land.—O ſend to my cruel brother; he has left word that nothing muſt follow him that does not come from you."

"For the world, then," cried Cecilia, "would I not baffle his diſcretion! indeed you muſt ſubmit to your fate, indeed Mrs. Harrel you muſt endeavour to bear it better."

Mrs. Harrel, ſhedding a flood of tears, declared ſhe would try to follow her advice, but again beſought her in the utmoſt agony to ſend after her brother, proteſting ſhe did not think even her life would be ſafe in making ſo long a journey with Mr. Harrel in his preſent ſtate of mind: his character, ſhe ſaid, was totally changed, his gaiety, good humour, and ſprightlineſs were turned into roughneſs and moroſeneſs, and, ſince his great loſſes at play, he was grown ſo fierce and furious, that to oppoſe him even in a trifle, rendered him quite outrageous in paſſion.

Cecilia, though truly concerned, and almoſt melted, yet refuſed to interfere with Mr. Arnott, and even thought it but juſtice to acknowledge ſhe had adviſed his retreat.

"And can you have been ſo cruel?" cried Mrs. Harrel, with ſtill encreaſing violence of ſorrow, "to rob me of my only friend, to deprive me of my brother's affection, at the very time I am forced out of the kingdom, with a huſband who is ready to murder me, and who ſays he hates the ſight of me, and all becauſe I cannot get him this fatal, fatal money!—O, Miſs Beverley, how could I have thought to have had ſuch an office from you?"

Cecilia was beginning a juſtification, when a meſſage came from Mr. Harrel, deſiring to ſee his wife immediately.

Mrs. Harrel, in great terror, caſt herſelf at Cecilia's feet, and clinging to her knees, called out, "I dare not go to him! I dare not go to him! he wants to know my ſucceſs, and when he hears my brother is run away, I am ſure he will kill me!—Oh, Miſs Beverley, how could you ſend him away? how could you be ſo inhuman as to leave me to the rage of Mr. Harrel?"

Cecilia, diſtreſſed and trembling herſelf, conjured her to riſe and be conſoled; but

Mrs. Harrel, weak and frightened, could only weep and ſupplicate: "I don't aſk you," ſhe cried, "to give the money yourſelf, but only to ſend for my brother, that he may protect me, and beg Mr. Harrel not to treat me ſo cruelly,—conſider but what a long, long journey I am going to make! conſider how often you uſed to ſay you would love me for ever! conſider you have robbed me of the tendereſt brother in the world!—Oh, Miſs Beverley, ſend for him back, or be a ſiſter to me yourſelf, and let not your poor Priſcilla leave her native land without help or pity!"

Cecilia, wholly overcome, now knelt too, and embracing her with tears, ſaid, "Oh Priſcilla, plead and reproach no more! what you wiſh ſhall be yours,—I will ſend for your brother,—I will do what you pleaſe!"

"Now you are my friend indeed!" cried Mrs. Harrel, "let me but *ſee* my brother, and his heart will yield to my diſtreſs, and he will ſoften Mr. Harrel by giving his unhappy ſiſter this parting bounty."

Cecilia then took a pen in her hand to write to Mr. Arnott; but ſtruck almoſt in the ſame moment with a notion of treachery in calling him from a retreat which her own counſel had made him ſeek, profeſſedly to expoſe him to a ſupplication which, from his preſent ſituation might lead him to ruin, ſhe haſtily flung it from her, and exclaimed, "No, excellent Mr. Arnott, I will not ſo unworthily betray you!"

"And can you, Miſs Beverley, can you at laſt," cried Mrs. Harrel, "be ſo barbarous as to retract?"

"No, my poor Priſcilla," anſwered Cecilia, "I cannot ſo cruelly diſappoint you; my pity ſhall however make no ſufferer but myſelf,—I cannot ſend for Mr. Arnott,—from me you muſt have the money, and may it anſwer the purpoſe for which it is given, and reſtore to you the tenderneſs of your huſband, and the peace of your own heart!"

Priſcilla, ſcarce waiting to thank her, flew with this intelligence to Mr. Harrel; who with the ſame impetuoſity, ſcarce waiting to ſay he was glad of it, ran himſelf to bring the Jew from whom the money was to be procured. Every thing was ſoon ſettled, Cecilia had no time for retracting, and repentance they had not the delicacy to regard: again, therefore, ſhe ſigned her name for paying the principal and intereſt of another 1000*l.* within ten days after ſhe was of age: and having taken the money, ſhe accompanied Mr. and Mrs. Harrel into another room. Preſenting it then with an affecting ſolemnity to Mrs. Harrel, "accept, Priſcilla," ſhe cried, "this irrefragable mark of the ſincerity of my friendſhip: but ſuffer me at the ſame time to tell you, it is the laſt to ſo conſiderable an amount I ever mean to offer, receive it, therefore, with kindneſs, but uſe it with diſcretion."

She then embraced her, and eager now to avoid acknowledgment, as before ſhe had been to eſcape importunities, ſhe left them together.

The ſoothing recompenſe of ſuccouring benevolence, followed not this gift, nor made amends for this loſs; perplexity and uneaſineſs, regret and reſentment, accompanied the donation, and reſted upon her mind; ſhe feared ſhe had done wrong; ſhe was certain Mr. Monckton would blame her; he knew not the perſecution ſhe ſuffered, nor would he make any allowance for the threats which alarmed, or the entreaties which melted her.

Far other had been her feelings at the generoſity ſhe exerted for the Hills; no doubts then tormented her, and no repentance embittered her beneficence. Their worth was without ſuſpicion, and their miſfortunes were not of their own ſeeking; the poſt in which they had been ſtationed they had never deſerted, and the poverty into which they had ſunk was accidental and unavoidable.

But here, every evil had been wantonly incurred by vanity and licentiouſneſs, and ſhameleſsly followed by injuſtice and fraud: the diſturbance of her mind only increaſed by reflection, for when the rights of the creditors with their injuries occurred to her, ſhe enquired of herſelf by what title or equity, ſhe had ſo liberally aſſiſted Mr. Harrel in eluding their claims, and flying the puniſhment which the law would inflict.

Startled by this conſideration, ſhe moſt ſeverely reproached herſelf for a compliance of which ſhe had ſo lightly weighed the conſequences, and thought with the utmoſt diſmay, that while ſhe had flattered herſelf ſhe was merely indulging the dictates of humanity, ſhe might perhaps be accuſed by the world as an abetter of guile and injuſtice.

"And yet," ſhe continued, "whom can I eſſentially have injured but myſelf? would his creditors have been benefited by my refuſal? had I braved the execution of his dreadful threat, and quitted his houſe before I was wrought upon to aſſiſt him, would his ſuicide have leſſened their loſſes, or ſecured their demands? even if he had no intention but to intimidate me, who will be wronged by my enabling him to go abroad, or who would be better paid were he ſeized and confined? All that remains of his ſhattered fortune may ſtill be claimed, though I have ſaved him from a lingering impriſonment, deſperate for himſelf and his wife, and uſeleſs for thoſe he has plundered."

And thus, now ſoothed by the purity of her intentions, and now uneaſy from the rectitude of her principles, ſhe alternately rejoiced and repined at what ſhe had done.

At dinner Mr. Harrel was all civility and good humour. He warmly thanked Cecilia for the kindneſs ſhe had ſhewn him, and gaily added, "You ſhould be abſolved from all the miſchief you may do for a twelvemonth to come, in reward for the preſervation from miſchief which you have this day effected."

"The preſervation," ſaid Cecilia, "will I hope be for many days. But tell me, ſir, exactly, at what time I may acquaint Mrs. Delvile I ſhall wait upon her?"

"Perhaps," he anſwered, "by eight o'clock; perhaps by nine; you will not mind half an hour?"

"Certainly not;" ſhe anſwered, unwilling by diſputing about a trifle to diminiſh his ſatisfaction in her aſſiſtance. She wrote, therefore, another note to Mrs. Delvile, deſiring ſhe would not expect her till near ten o'clock, and promiſing to account and apologize for theſe ſeeming caprices when ſhe had the honour of ſeeing her.

The reſt of the afternoon ſhe ſpent wholly in exhorting Mrs. Harrel to ſhew more fortitude, and conjuring her to ſtudy nothing while abroad but œconomy, prudence, and houſewifry: a leſſon how hard for the thoughtleſs and negligent Priſcilla! ſhe heard the advice with repugnance, and only anſwered it with helpleſs complaints that ſhe knew not how to ſpend leſs money than ſhe had always done.

After tea, Mr. Harrel, ſtill in high ſpirits, went out, entreating Cecilia to ſtay with Priſcilla till his return, which he promiſed ſhould be early.

Nine o'clock, however, came, and he did not appear; Cecilia then grew anxious to keep her appointment with Mrs. Delvile; but ten o'clock alſo came, and ſtill Mr. Harrel was abſent.

She then determined to wait no longer, and rang the bell for her ſervant and chair: but when Mrs. Harrel deſired to be informed the moment that Mr. Harrel returned, the man ſaid he had been come home more than half an hour.

Much ſurpriſed, ſhe enquired where he was.

"In his own room, madam, and gave orders not to be diſturbed."

Cecilia, who was not much pleaſed at this account, was eaſily perſuaded to ſtay a few minutes longer; and, fearing ſome new evil, ſhe was going to ſend him a meſſage, by way of knowing how he was employed, when he came himſelf into the room.

"Well, ladies," he cried, in a hurrying manner, "who is for Vauxhall?"

"Vauxhall!" repeated Mrs. Harrel, while Cecilia, ſtaring, perceived in his face a look of perturbation that extremely alarmed her.

"Come, come," he cried, "we have no time to loſe. A hackney coach will ſerve us; we won't wait for our own."

"Have you then given up going abroad?" ſaid Mrs. Harrel.

"No, no; where can we go from half ſo well? Let us live while we live! I have ordered a chaiſe to be in waiting there. Come, let's be gone."

"Firſt," ſaid Cecilia, "let me wiſh you both good night."

"Will you not go with me?" cried Mrs. Harrel; "how can I go to Vauxhall alone?"

"You are not alone," anſwered ſhe; "but if I go, how am I to return?"

"She ſhall return with you," cried Mr. Harrel, "if you deſire it; you ſhall return together."

Mrs. Harrel, ſtarting up in rapture, called out, "Oh, Mr. Harrel, will you indeed leave me in England?"

"Yes," anſwered he reproachfully, "if you will make a better friend than you have made a wife, and if Miſs Beverley is content to take charge of you."

"What can all this mean?" exclaimed Cecilia; "is it poſſible you can be ſerious? Are you really going yourſelf, and will you ſuffer Mrs. Harrel to remain?"

"I am," he anſwered, "and I will."

Then ringing the bell, he ordered a hackney coach.

Mrs. Harrel was ſcarce able to breathe for extaſy, nor Cecilia for amazement; while Mr. Harrel, attending to neither of them, walked for ſome time ſilently about the room.

"But how," cried Cecilia at laſt, "can I poſſibly go? Mrs. Delvile muſt already be aſtoniſhed at my delay; and if I diſappoint her again, ſhe will hardly receive me."

"O make not any difficulties," cried Mrs. Harrel, in an agony; "if Mr. Harrel will let me ſtay, ſure you will not be ſo cruel as to oppoſe him?"

"But why," ſaid Cecilia, "ſhould either of us go to Vauxhall? ſurely that is no place for a parting ſo melancholy."

A ſervant then came in, and ſaid the hackney coach was at the door.

Mr. Harrel, ſtarting at the ſound, called out, "Come, what do we wait for? If we go not immediately, we may be prevented."

Cecilia then again wiſhed them good night, proteſting ſhe could fail Mrs. Delvile no longer.

Mrs. Harrel, half wild at this refuſal, conjured her in the moſt frantic manner to give way, exclaiming, "O cruel! cruel! to deny me this laſt requeſt! I will kneel to you day and night," ſinking upon the ground before her, "and I will ſerve you as the humbleſt of your ſlaves, if you will but be kind in this laſt inſtance, and ſave me from baniſhment and miſery!"

"Oh riſe, Mrs. Harrel," cried Cecilia, aſhamed of her proſtration, and ſhocked by her vehemence, "riſe and let me reſt!—it is painful to me to refuſe, but to comply for ever, in defiance of my judgment—Oh Mrs. Harrel, I know no longer what is kind or what is cruel, nor have I known for ſome time paſt right from wrong, nor good from evil!"

"Come," cried Mr. Harrel, impetuouſly, "I wait not another minute!"

"Leave her then with me!" ſaid Cecilia, "I will perform my promiſe; Mr. Arnott will I am ſure hold his to be ſacred; ſhe ſhall now go with him, ſhe ſhall hereafter come to me,—leave her but behind, and depend upon our care."

"No, no," cried he, with quickneſs, "I muſt take care of her myſelf. I ſhall not carry her abroad with me, but the only legacy I can leave her, is a warning which I hope ſhe will remember forever. *You*, however, need not go."

"What," cried Mrs. Harrel, "leave me at Vauxhall, and yet leave me alone?"

"What of that?" cried he, with fierceneſs, "do you not deſire to be left? Have you any regard for me, or for any-thing upon earth but yourſelf? Ceaſe theſe vain clamours, and come, I inſiſt upon it, this moment."

And then, with a violent oath, he declared he would be detained no longer, and approached in great rage to ſeize her. Mrs. Harrel ſhrieked aloud; and the terrified Cecilia exclaimed, "If indeed you are to part to-night, part not thus dreadfully!—riſe, Mrs. Harrel, and comply!—be reconciled, be kind to her, Mr. Harrel!—and I will go with her myſelf,—we will all go together!"

"And why, cried Mr. Harrel, more gently, yet with the utmoſt emotion, "why ſhould *you* go!—*you* want no warning! *you* need no terror!—better far had you fly us, and my wife, when I am ſet out, may find you."

Mrs. Harrel, however, ſuffered her not to recede; and Cecilia, though half diſtracted by the ſcenes of horror and perplexity in which ſhe was perpetually engaged, ordered her ſervant to acquaint Mrs. Delvile ſhe was again compelled to defer waiting upon her.

Mr. Harrel then hurried them both into the coach, which he directed to Vauxhall.

"Pray write to me when you are landed," ſaid Mrs. Harrel, who now releaſed from her perſonal apprehenſions, began to feel ſome for her huſband.

He made not any anſwer. She then aſked to what part of France he meant to go; but ſtill he did not reply; and when ſhe urged him by a third queſtion, he told her in a rage to torment him no more.

During the reſt of the ride, not another word was ſaid. Mrs. Harrel wept; her huſband guarded a gloomy ſilence; and Cecilia moſt unpleaſantly paſſed her time between anxious ſuſpicions of ſome new ſcheme, and terrified wonder in what all theſe tranſac-ons would terminate.

CHAP. VI.

A MAN OF BUSINESS.

WHEN they entered Vauxhall, Mr. Harrel endeavoured to diſmiſs his mo-ſeneſs, and affecting his uſual gaiety, ſtrug-ed to recover his ſpirits: but the effort was in, he could neither talk nor look like mſelf; and though from time to time he ſumed his air of wonted levity, he could t ſupport it, but drooped and hung his ad in evident deſpondency.

He made them take ſeveral turns in the iſt of the company, and walked ſo faſt, at they could hardly keep pace with him, if he hoped by exerciſe to reſtore his viva-ty; but every attempt failed, he ſunk and ew ſadder, and muttering between his eth, "this is not to be borne!" he haſtily lled to a waiter to bring him a bottle of ampagne.

Of this he drank glaſs after glaſs, notwith-nding Cecilia, as Mrs. Harrel had not courage to ſpeak, entreated him to forbear. He ſeemed, however, not to hear her; but when he had drunk what he thought neceſſary to revive him, he conveyed them into an unfrequented part of the garden, and as ſoon as they were out of ſight of all but a few ſtragglers, he ſuddenly ſtopt, and, in great agitation, ſaid, "My chaiſe will ſoon be ready, and I ſhall take of you a long farewell!—All my affairs are unpropitious to my ſpeedy return;—the wine is now mounting into my head, and perhaps I may not be able to ſay much by and by. I fear I have been cruel to you, Priſcilla, and I begin to wiſh I had ſpared you this parting ſcene; yet let it not be baniſhed your remembrance, but think of it when you are tempted to ſuch mad folly as has ruined us."

Mrs. Harrel wept too much to make any anſwer; and turning from her to Cecilia, "Oh madam," he cried, "to *you*, indeed, I dare not ſpeak! I have uſed you moſt unworthily, but I pay for it all! I aſk you not to pity or forgive me, I know it is impoſſible you ſhould do either."

"No," cried the ſoftened Cecilia, "it is not impoſſible, I do both at this moment, and I hope—"

"Do not hope," interrupted he; "be not ſo angelic, for I cannot bear it! Benevolence like yours ſhould have fallen into worthier hands. But come, let us return to the company.

pany. My head grows giddy, but my heart is ſtill heavy; I muſt make them more fit companions for each other."

He would then have hurried them back; but Cecilia, endeavouring to ſtop him, ſaid, "You do not mean, I hope, to call for more wine?"

"Why not?" cried he, with affected ſpirit; "what, ſhall we not be merry before we part? Yes, we will all be merry; for if we are not, how ſhall we part at all?—Oh not without a ſtruggle!—" Then, ſtopping, he pauſed a moment, and caſting off the maſk of levity, ſaid, in accents the moſt ſolemn, "I commit this packet to *you*," giving a ſealed parcel to Cecilia; "had I written it later, its contents had been kinder to my wife, for now the hour of ſeparation approaches, ill-will and reſentment ſubſide. Poor Priſcilla!—I am ſorry—but you will ſuccour her, I am ſure you will.—Oh had I known you myſelf before this infatuation—bright pattern of all goodneſs!—But I was devoted,—a ruined wretch before ever you entered my houſe; unworthy to be ſaved, unworthy that virtues ſuch as yours ſhould dwell under the ſame roof with me! But come—come now, or my reſolution will waver, and I ſhall not go at laſt."

"But what is this packet!" cried Cecilia, "and why do you give it to me?"

"No matter, no matter, you will know

by and by;—the chaiſe waits, and I muſt gather courage to be gone."

He then preſſed forward, anſwering neither to remonſtrance nor intreaty from his frightened companions.

The moment they returned to the covered walk, they were met by Mr. Marriot. Mr. Harrel, ſtarting, endeavoured to paſs him; but when he approached, and ſaid, "You have ſent, Sir, no anſwer to my letter!" he ſtopt, and in a tone of forced politeneſs, ſaid, "No, Sir, but I ſhall anſwer it to-morrow, and to-night I hope you will do me the honour of ſupping with me."

Mr. Marriot, looking openly at Cecilia as his inducement, though evidently regarding himſelf as an injured man, heſitated a moment, yet accepted the invitation.

"To ſupper!" cried Mrs. Harrel, "what here?"

"To ſupper!" repeated Cecilia, "and how are we to get home?"

"Think not of that theſe two hours," anſwered he; "come, let us look for a box."

Cecilia then grew quite urgent with him to give up a ſcheme which muſt keep them ſo late; and Mrs. Harrel repeatedly exclaimed, "Indeed people will think it very odd to ſee us here without any party!" But he heeded them not; and perceiving at ſome diſtance Mr. Morrice, he called out to him to find them a box; for the evening was very pleaſant,

ſant,

faſt, and the gardens were ſo much crowded, that no accommodation was unſeized.

"Sir," cried Morrice, with his uſual readineſs, "I'll get you one if I turn out ten old Aldermen ſucking cuſtards."

Juſt after he was gone, a fat, ſleek, vulgar-looking man, dreſſed in a bright purple coat, with a deep red waiſtcoat, and a wig bulging far from his head with ſmall round curls, while his plump face and perſon announced plenty and good living, and an air of defiance ſpoke the fullneſs of his purſe, ſtrutted boldly up to Mr. Harrel, and accoſting him in a manner that ſhewed ſome diffidence of his reception, but none of his right, ſaid, "Sir, your humble ſervant;" and made a bow firſt to him, and then to the ladies.

"Sir, your's," replied Mr. Harrel, ſcornfully, and without touching his hat he walked quick on.

His fat acquaintance, who ſeemed but little diſpoſed to be offended with impunity, inſtantly replaced his hat on his head, and with a look that implied *I'll fit you for this!* put his hands to his ſides, and following him, ſaid, "Sir, I muſt make bold to beg the favour of exchanging a few words with you."

"Ay, Sir," anſwered Mr. Harrel, "come to me to-morrow, and you ſhall exchange as many as you pleaſe."

"Nothing like the time preſent, Sir," anſwered the man, "as for to-morrow, I believe it intends to come no more; for I have heard of it any time theſe three years. I mean no reflections, Sir, but let every man have his right. That's what I ſay, and that's my notion of things."

Mr. Harrel, with a violent execration, aſked what he meant by dunning him at ſuch a place as Vauxhall?

"One place, Sir," he replied, "is as good as another place; for ſo as what one does is good, 'tis no matter for where it may be. A *man of buſineſs* never wants a counter, if he can meet with a joint-ſtool. For my part, I'm all for a clear conſcience, and no bills without receipts to them."

"And if you were all for broken bones," cried Mr. Harrel, angrily, "I would oblige you with them without delay."

"Sir," cried the man, equally provoked, "this is talking quite out of character; for as to broken bones, there's ne'er a perſon in all England, gentle nor ſimple, can ſay he's a right to break mine, for I'm not a perſon of that ſort, but a man of as good property as another man; and there's ne'er a cuſtomer I have in the world that's more his own man than myſelf."

"Lord bleſs me, Mr. Hobſon," cried Mrs. Harrel, "don't follow us in this manner! If we meet any of our acquaintance, they'll think us half crazy."

"Ma'am,"

"Madam," anſwered Mr. Hobſon, again taking off his hat, "if I'm treated with proper reſpect, no man will behave more generous than myſelf; but if I'm affronted, all I can ſay is, it may go harder with ſome folks than they think for."

Here a little mean looking man, very thin, and almoſt bent double with perpetual cringing, came up to Mr. Hobſon, and pulling him by the ſleeve, whiſpered, yet loud enough to be heard, "It's ſurpriſeable to me, Mr. Hobſon, you can behave ſo out of the way! For my part, perhaps I've as much my due as another perſon, but I dares to ſay I ſhall have it when it's convenient, and I'd ſcorn for to miſleſt a gentleman when he's taking his pleaſure."

"Lord bleſs me," cried Mrs. Harrel, "what ſhall we do now? here's all Mr. Harrel's creditors coming upon us!"

"Do?" cried Mr. Harrel, re-aſſuming an air of gaiety, "why give them all a ſupper, to be ſure. Come, gentlemen, will you favour me with your company to ſupper?"

"Sir," anſwered Mr. Hobſon, ſomewhat ſoftened by this unexpected invitation, "I've ſupped this hour and more, and had my glaſs too, for I'm as willing to ſpend my money as another man; only what I ſay is this, I don't chuſe to be cheated, for that's loſing one's ſubſtance, and getting no credit; however, as to drinking another glaſs, or ſuch a matter as that, I'll do it with all the pleaſure in life."

"And as to me," ſaid the other man, whoſe name was Simkins, and whoſe head almoſt touched the ground, by the profoundneſs of his reverence, "I can't upon no account think of taking the liberty; but if I may juſt ſtand without, I'll make bold to go ſo far as juſt for to drink my humble duty to the ladies in a cup of cyder."

"Are you mad, Mr. Harrel, are you mad?" cried his wife, "to think of aſking ſuch people as theſe to ſupper? What will every body ſay? Suppoſe any of our acquaintance ſhould ſee us? I am ſure I ſhall die with ſhame."

"Mad!" repeated he; "no, not mad, but merry. O ho, Mr. Morrice, why have you been ſo long? what have you done for us?"

"Why, Sir," anſwered Morrice, returning with a look ſomewhat leſs elated than he had ſet out, "the gardens are ſo full, there is not a box to be had: but I hope we ſhall get one for all that; for I obſerved one of the beſt boxes in the garden, juſt to the right there, with nobody in it but that gentleman who made me ſpill the tea-pot at the Pantheon. So I made an apology, and told him the caſe; but he only ſaid *humph?* and *hay?* ſo then I told it all over again, but he ſerved me juſt the ſame, for he never ſeems to hear what one ſays till one's juſt done, and then he begins to recollect one's ſpeaking to him; however, though I repeated it all over and over again, I could get nothing from him but just that *humph?* and *hay?* but he is ſo remarkably abſent, that I dare ſay if we all go and ſit down round him, he won't know a word of the matter."

"Won't he?" cried Mr. Harrel, "have at him, then!"

And he followed Mr. Morrice, though Cecilia, who now half ſuſpected that all was to end in a mere idle frolic, warmly joined her remonſtrances to thoſe of Mrs. Harrel, which were made with the utmoſt, but with fruitleſs earneſtneſs.

Mr. Meadows, who was ſeated in the middle of the box, was lolloping upon the table with his cuſtomary eaſe, and picking his teeth with his uſual inattention to all about him. The intruſion, however, of ſo large a party, ſeemed to threaten his inſenſibility with unavoidable diſturbance; though, imagining they meant but to look in at the box, and paſs on, he made not at their firſt approach any alteration in his attitude or employment.

"See, ladies," cried the officious Morrice, "I told you there was room; and I am ſure this gentleman will be very happy to make way for you, if it's only out of good-nature to the waiters, as he is neither eating nor drinking, nor doing any thing at all. So if you two ladies will go in at that ſide, Mr. Harrel and that other gentleman," pointing to Mr. Marriot, "may go to the other, and then I'll ſit by the ladies here, and thoſe other two gentlemen——"

Here Mr. Meadows, raiſing himſelf from his reclining poſture, and ſtaring Morrice in the face, gravely ſaid, "What's all this, Sir!"

Morrice, who expected to have arranged the whole party without a queſtion, and who underſtood ſo little of modiſh airs as to ſuſpect neither affectation nor trick in the abſence of mind and indolence of manners which he obſerved in Mr. Meadows, was utterly amazed by this interrogatory, and ſtaring himſelf in return, ſaid, "Sir, you ſeemed ſo thoughtful—I did not think—I did not ſuppoſe you would have taken any notice of juſt a perſon or two coming into the box."

"Did not you, Sir?" ſaid Mr. Meadows very coldly; "why then now you do, perhaps you'll be ſo obliging as to let me have my own box to myſelf."

And then again he returned to his favourite poſition.

"Certainly, Sir," ſaid Morrice, bowing; "I am ſure I did not mean to diſturb you: for you ſeemed ſo loſt in thought, that I'm ſure I did not much believe you would have ſeen us."

"Why, Sir," ſaid Mr. Hobſon, ſtrutting forward, "if I may ſpeak my opinion, I ſhould think, as you happen to be quite alone, a little agreeable company would be no ſuch bad thing. At leaſt that's my notion."

"And if I might take the liberty," ſaid the ſmooth-tongued Mr. Simkins, "for to put in a word, I ſhould think the beſt way would be, if the gentleman has no peticklar objection, for me juſt to ſtand ſomewhere hereabouts, and ſo, when he's had what he's a mind to, be ready for to pop in at one ſide, as he comes out at the t'other; for if one does not look pretty 'cute ſuch a full night as this, a box is whipt away before one knows where one is."

"No, no, no," cried Mrs. Harrel, impatiently; "let us neither ſup in this box nor in any other; let us go away entirely."

"Indeed we muſt! indeed we ought!" cried Cecilia; "it is utterly improper we ſhould ſtay; pray let us be gone immediately."

Mr. Harrel paid not the leaſt regard to theſe requeſts; but Mr. Meadows, who could no longer ſeem unconſcious of what paſſed, did himſelf ſo much violence as to ariſe, and aſk if the ladies would be ſeated.

"I ſaid ſo!" cried Morrice, triumphantly; "I was ſure there was no gentleman but would be happy to accommodate two ſuch ladies!"

The ladies, however, far from happy in being ſo accommodated, again tried their utmoſt influence in perſuading Mr. Harrel to give up this ſcheme, but he would not hear them; he inſiſted upon their going into the box, and, extending the privilege which Mr. Meadows had given, he invited without ceremony the whole party to follow.

Mr. Meadows, though he ſeemed to think this a very extraordinary encroachment, had already made ſuch an effort from his general languor, in the repulſe he had given to Morrice, that he could exert himſelf no farther; but after looking around him with mingled vacancy and contempt, he again ſeated himſelf, and ſuffered Morrice to do the honours without more oppoſition.

Morrice, but too happy in the office, placed Cecilia next to Mr. Meadows, and would have made Mr. Marriot her other neighbour, but ſhe inſiſted upon not being parted from Mrs. Harrel; and therefore, as he choſe to ſit alſo by that lady himſelf, Mr. Marriot was obliged to follow Mr. Harrel to the other ſide of the box. Mr. Hobſon, without farther invitation, placed himſelf comfortably in one of the corners; and Mr. Simkins, who ſtood modeſtly for ſome time in another, finding the farther encouragement for which he waited was not likely to arrive, dropt quietly into his ſeat without it.

Supper was now ordered, and while it was preparing, Mr. Harrel ſat totally ſilent; but Mr. Meadows thought proper to force himſelf to talk with Cecilia, though ſhe could well have diſpenſed with ſuch an exertion of his politeneſs.

"Do you like this place, ma'am?"

"Indeed I hardly know,—I never was here before."

"No wonder! the only ſurpriſe is, that any body can come to it at all. To ſee a ſet of people walking after nothing! ſtrolling about without view or object! 'tis ſtrange! don't you think ſo, ma'am?"

"Yes,—I believe ſo," ſaid Cecilia, ſcarce hearing him.

"O it gives me the vapours, the horrors," cried he, "to ſee what poor creatures we all are! taking pleaſure even from the privation of it! forcing ourſelves into exerciſe and toil, when we might at leaſt have the indulgence of ſitting ſtill and repoſing!"

"Lord, Sir," cried Morrice, "don't you like walking?"

"Walking?" cried he; "I know nothing ſo humiliating: to ſee a rational being in ſuch mechanical motion! with no knowledge upon what principles he proceeds, but plodding on, one foot before another, without even any consciouſneſs which is ſuch, [illegible] either—"

"Sir," interrupted Mr. Hobſon, "I hope you won't take it amiſs if I make bold to tell my opinion; for my way is this, let every man ſpeak his maxim! But what I ſay as to this matter, is this, if a man must always be ſtopping to conſider what foot he is ſtanding upon, he had need have little to do; being the right does as well as the left, and the left as well as the right. And that, Sir, I think, is a fair argument."

Mr. Meadows deigned no other anſwer to this ſpeech than a look of contempt.

"I fancy, Sir," ſaid Morrice, "you are fond of riding, for all your good horſemen like nothing elſe."

"Riding!" exclaimed Mr. Meadows; "oh barbarous! Wreſtling and boxing are polite arts to it! Truſting to the diſcretion of an animal leſs intellectual than ourſelves! a ſudden ſpring may break all our limbs, a ſtumble may fracture our ſculls! And what is the inducement? to get melted with heat, killed with fatigue, and covered with duſt! miſerable infatuation!—Do you love riding, ma'am?"

"Yes, very well, Sir."

"I am glad to hear it," cried he, with a vacant ſmile; "you are quite right; I am entirely of your opinion."

Mr. Simkins now, with a look of much

perplexity, now riſing and bowing, ſaid, “ I don't mean, Sir, to be ſo rude as to put in my oar, but if I did not take you wrong, I'm ſure just now I thought you ſeemed for to make no great 'count of riding, and yet now, all of the ſudden, one would think you was a ſpeaking up for it!”

“ Why, Sir,” cried Morrice, “ if you neither like riding nor walking, you can have no pleaſure at all but only in ſitting.”

“ Sitting!” repeated Mr. Meadows, with a yawn, “ O worſe and worſe! it diſpirits me to death! it robs me of all fire and life! it weakens circulation, and deſtroys elaſticity.”

“ Pray then, Sir,” ſaid Morrice, “ do you like any better to ſtand?”

“ To ſtand? O intolerable! the moſt unmeaning thing in the world! one had better be made a mummy!”

“ Why then, pray Sir,” ſaid Mr. Hobſon, “ let me aſk the favour of you to tell us what it is you *do* like?”

Mr. Meadows, though he ſtared him full in the face, began picking his teeth without making any anſwer.

“ You ſee, Mr. Hobſon,” ſaid Mr. Simkins, “ the gentleman has no mind for to tell you, but if I may take the liberty juſt to put in, I think if he neither likes walking, nor riding, nor ſitting, nor ſtanding; I take it he likes nothing.”

“ Well, Sir,” ſaid Morrice, “ but here

comes ſupper, and I hope you will like that. Pray, Sir, may I help you to a bit of this ham?"

Mr. Meadows, not ſeeming to hear him, ſuddenly, and with an air of extreme wearineſs, aroſe, and without ſpeaking to any body, abruptly made his way out of the box.

Mr. Harrel now, ſtarting from the gloomy reverie into which he had ſunk, undertook to do the honours of the table, inſiſting with much violence upon helping every body, calling for more proviſions, and ſtruggling to appear in high ſpirits and good humour.

In a few minutes Captain Areſby, who was paſſing by the box, ſtopt to make his compliments to Mrs. Harrel and Cecilia.

"What a concourſe!" he cried, caſting up his eyes with an expreſſion of half-dying fatigue, "are you not *accablé?* for my part, I hardly reſpire. I have really hardly ever had the honour of being ſo *obſedé* before."

"We can make very good room, Sir," ſaid Morrice, "if you chuſe to come in."

"Yes," ſaid Mr. Simkins, obſequiouſly ſtanding up, "I am ſure the gentleman will be very welcome to take my place, for I did not mean for to ſit down, only juſt to look agreeable."

"By no means, Sir," anſwered the Captain: "I ſhall be quite *au deſeſpoir* if I derange any body."

"Sir," ſaid Mr. Hobſon, "I don't offer

you my place, becauſe I take it for granted if you had a mind to come in, you would not ſtand upon ceremony; for what I ſay is, let every man ſpeak his mind, and then we ſhall all know how to conduct ourſelves. That's my way, and let any man tell me a better!"

The Captain, after looking at him with a ſurpriſe not wholly unmixt with horror, turned from him without making any anſwer, and ſaid to Cecilia, "And how long, ma'am, have you tried this petrifying place?"

"An hour,—two hours, I believe," ſhe anſwered.

"Really? and nobody here! *aſſez de monde*, but nobody here! a blank *partout!*"

"Sir," ſaid Mr. Simkins, getting out of the box that he might bow with more facility, "I humbly crave pardon for the liberty, but if I underſtood right, you ſaid ſomething of a blank? pray, Sir, if I may be ſo free, has there been any thing of the nature of a lottery, or a raffle, in the garden? or the like of that?"

"Sir!" ſaid the Captain, regarding him from head to foot, "I am quite *aſſommé* that I cannot comprehend your alluſion."

"Sir, I aſk pardon," ſaid the man, bowing ſtill lower, "I only thought if in caſe it ſhould not be above half a crown, or ſuch a matter as that, I might perhaps ſtretch a point once in a way."

The Captain, more and more amazed, ſtared at him again, but not thinking it neceſſary to take any farther notice of him, he enquired of Cecilia, if ſhe meant to ſtay late.

"I hope not," ſhe replied, "I have already ſtayed later than I wiſhed to do."

"Really!" ſaid he, with an unmeaning ſmile: "Well, that is as horrid a thing as I have the *malheur* to know. For my part, I make it a principle not to ſtay long in theſe ſemi-barbarous places, for after a certain time, they bore me to that degree I am quite *abimé*. I ſhall, however, do *mon poſſible* to have the honour of ſeeing you again."

And then, with a ſmile of yet greater inſipidity, he proteſted he was *reduced to deſpair* in leaving her, and walked on.

"Pray, ma'am, if I may be ſo bold," ſaid Mr. Hobſon, "what countryman may that gentleman be?"

"An Engliſhman, I ſuppoſe, Sir," ſaid Cecilia.

"An Engliſhman, ma'am!" ſaid Mr. Hobſon, "why I could not underſtand one word in ten that came out of his mouth."

"Why indeed," ſaid Mr. Simkins, "he has a mighty petickler way of ſpeaking, for I'm ſure I thought I could have ſworn he ſaid ſomething of a blank, or to that amount, but I could make nothing of it when I come to aſk him about it."

"Let every man ſpeak to be underſtood," cried Mr. Hobſon, "that's my notion of things: for as to all thoſe fine words that nobody can make out, I hold them to be of no ble. "Suppoſe a man was to talk in that manner when he's doing buſineſs, what would be the upſhot? who'd underſtand what he meant? Well, that's the proof; what i'n't fit for buſineſs, I'n't of no value: that's my way of judging, and that's what I go upon."

"He ſaid ſome other things," rejoined Mr. Simkins, "that I could not make out very clear, only I had no mind to aſk any more queſtions, for fear of his anſwering me ſomething I ſhould not underſtand: but as well as I could make it out, I thought I heard him ſay there was nobody here! what he could mean by that, I can't pretend for to gueſs, for I'm ſure the garden is ſo ſtock full, that if there was to come many more, I don't know where they could cram 'em!"

"I took notice of it at the time," ſaid Mr. Hobſon, "for it i'n't many things are loſt upon me; and, to tell you the truth, I thought he had been making pretty free with his bottle, by his ſeeing no better."

"Bottle!" cried Mr. Harrel, "a moſt excellent hint, Mr. Hobſon! come! let us all make free with the bottle!"

He then called for more wine, and inſiſted that every body ſhould pledge him. Mr. Marriot and Mr. Morrice made not any objection, and Mr. Hobſon and Mr. Simkins conſented with much delight.

Mr. Harrel now grew extremely unruly, the wine he had already drank being thus powerfully aided; and his next project was to make his wife and Cecilia follow his example. Cecilia, more incenſed than ever to ſee no preparation made for his departure, and all poſſible pains taken to unfit him for ſetting out, refuſed him with equal firmneſs and diſpleaſure, and lamented with the bittereſt ſelf-reproaches, the conſent which had been forced from her to be preſent at a ſcene of ſuch diſorder: but Mrs. Harrel would have oppoſed him in vain, had not his attention been called off to another object. This was Sir Robert Floyer, who perceiving the party at ſome diſtance, no ſooner obſerved Mr. Marriot in ſuch company, than advancing to the box with an air of rage and defiance, he told Mr. Harrel he had ſomething to ſay to him.

"Ay," cried Harrel, "ſay to me? and ſo have I to ſay to you! Come amongſt us and be merry! Here, make room, make way! Sit cloſe, my friends!"

Sir Robert, who now ſaw he was in no ſituation to be reaſoned with, ſtood for a moment ſilent; and then, looking round the box, and obſerving Meſſrs. Hobſon and Simkins, he exclaimed aloud, "Why what queer party have you got into? who the d—l have you picked up here?"

Mr. Hobſon, who, to the importance of lately acquired wealth, now added the courage of newly drank champaigne, ſtoutly kept his ground, without ſeeming at all con-

Hobſon was included in this interrogation, but Mr. Simkins, who had ſtill his way to make in the world, and whoſe habitual ſervility would have reſiſted a larger draught, was eaſily intimidated; he again, therefore, ſtood up, and with the moſt cringing reſpect offered the Baronet his place: who, taking neither of the offer nor offerer the ſmalleſt notice, ſtood ſtill oppoſite to Mr. Harrel, waiting for ſome explanation.

Mr. Harrel, however, who now grew really incapable of giving any, only repeated his invitation, that he would make one among them.

“One among you?” cried he, angrily, and pointing to Mr. Hobſon, “why you don't fancy I'll ſit down with a bricklayer?”

“A bricklayer?” ſaid Mr. Harrel, “ay, ſure, and a hoſier too; ſit down, Mr. Simkins, keep your place, man!”

Mr. Simkins moſt thankfully bowed; but Mr. Hobſon, who could no longer avoid feeling the perſonality of this reflection, boldly anſwered, “Sir, you may ſit down with a worſe man any day in the week! I have done nothing I'm aſhamed of, and no man can ſay to me why did you ſo? I don't tell you, Sir, what I'm worth; no one has a right to aſk; I only ſay three times five is fifteen! that's all.”

“Why what the d—l, you impudent fellow,”

low," cried the haughty Baronet, "you don't preſume to mutter, do you?"

"Sir," anſwered Mr. Hobſon, very hotly, "I ſha'n't put up with abuſe from no man! I've got a fair character in the world, and wherewithal to live by own liking. And what I have is my own, and all I ſay is, let every one ſay the ſame, for that's the way to fear no man, and face the d—l."

"What do you mean by that, fellow?" cried Sir Robert.

"Fellow, Sir! this is talking no how. Do you think a man of ſubſtance, that's got above the world, is to be treated like a little ſcrubby apprentice? Let every man have his own, that's always my way of thinking; and this I can ſay for myſelf, I have as good a right to ſhew my head where I pleaſe as ever a member of parliament in all England; and I wiſh every body here could ſay as much."

Sir Robert, fury ſtarting into his eyes, was beginning an anſwer; but Mrs. Harrel with terror, and Cecilia with dignity, calling upon them both to forbear, the Baronet deſired Morrice to relinquiſh his place to him, and ſeating himſelf next to Mrs. Harrel, gave over the conteſt.

Mean while Mr. Simkins, hoping to ingratiate himſelf with the company, advanced to Mr. Hobſon, already cooled by finding himſelf unanſwered, and reproachfully ſaid, "Mr. Hobſon, if I may make ſo free, I muſt needs be bold to ſay I am quite aſhamed of you! a person of your ſtanding and credit for to talk ſo diſreſpectful, as if a gentleman had not a right to take a little pleaſure, becauſe he juſt happens to owe you a little matters of money: fie, fie, Mr. Hobſon! I did not expect you to behave ſo deſpiſeable!"

"Deſpiſeable!" anſwered Mr. Hobſon, "I'd ſcorn as much to do any thing deſpiſeable as yourſelf, or any thing miſbecoming of a gentleman; and as to coming to ſuch a place as this may be, why I have no objection to it. All I ſtand to is this, let every man have his due; for as to taking a little pleaſure, here I am, as one may ſay, doing the ſame myſelf; but where's the harm of that? who's a right to call a man to account that's clear of the world? Not that I mean to boaſt, nor nothing like it, but, as I ſaid before, five times five is fifteen;—that's my calculation."

Mr. Harrel, who, during this debate, had ſtill continued drinking, regardleſs of all oppoſition from his wife and Cecilia, now grew more and more turbulent: he inſiſted that Mr. Simkins ſhould return to his ſeat, ordered him another bumper of champaigne, and ſaying he had not half company enough to raiſe his ſpirits, deſired Morrice to go and invite more.

Morrice, always ready to promote a frolic, moſt chearfully conſented; but when

Cecilia, in a low voice, ſupplicated him to bring no one back; with ſtill more readineſs he made ſigns that he underſtood, and would obey her.

Mr. Harrel then began to ſing, and in ſo noiſy and riotous a manner, that nobody approached the box without ſtopping to ſtare at him; and thoſe who were new to ſuch ſcenes, not contented with merely looking in, ſtationed themſelves at ſome diſtance before it, to obſerve what was paſſing, and to contemplate with envy and admiration an appearance of mirth and enjoyment which they attributed to happineſs and pleaſure!

Mrs. Harrel, ſhocked to be ſeen in ſuch mixed company, grew every inſtant more reſtleſs and miſerable; and Cecilia, half diſtracted to think how they were to get home, paſſed all her time in making ſecret vows that if once again ſhe was delivered from Mr. Harrel ſhe would never ſee him more.

Sir Robert Floyer perceiving their mutual uneaſineſs, propoſed to eſcort them home himſelf; and Cecilia, notwithſtanding her averſion to him, was liſtening to the ſcheme, when Mr. Marriot, who had been evidently provoked and diſconcerted ſince the junction of the Baronet, ſuſpecting what was paſſing, offered his ſervices alſo, and in a tone of voice that did not promiſe a very quiet acquieſcence in a refuſal.

Cecilia, who, too eaſily, in their looks, ſaw all the eagerneſs of rivalry, now dreaded the conſequence of her deciſion, and therefore declined the aſſiſtance of either: but her diſtreſs was unſpeakable, as there was not one perſon in the party to whoſe care ſhe could commit herſelf, though the behaviour of Mr. Harrel, which every moment grew more diſorderly, rendered the neceſſity of quitting him urgent and uncontroulable.

When Morrice returned, ſtopping in the midſt of his loud and violent ſinging, he vehemently demanded what company he had brought him?

"None at all, Sir," anſwered Morrice, looking ſignificantly at Cecilia; "I have really been ſo unlucky as not to meet with any body who had a mind to come."

"Why then," anſwered he, ſtarting up, "I will ſeek ſome for myſelf." "O no, pray, Mr. Harrel, bring nobody elſe," cried his wife. "Hear us in pity," cried Cecilia, "and diſtreſs us no farther." "Diſtreſs you!" cried he, with quickneſs, "what, ſhall I not bring you thoſe pretty girls? Yes, one more glaſs, and I will teach you to welcome them."

And he poured out another bumper.

"This is inſupportable!" cried Cecilia, riſing, "and I can remain here no longer."

"This is cruel, indeed," cried Mrs. Harrel, burſting into tears, "did you only bring me here to inſult me?"

"No!" cried he, ſuddenly embracing her, "by this parting kiſs!" then wildly jumping upon his ſeat, he leapt over the table, and was out of ſight in an inſtant.

Amazement ſeized all who remained: Mrs. Harrel and Cecilia, indeed, doubted not but he was actually gone to the chaiſe he had ordered; but the manner of his departure affrighted them, and his preceding behaviour had made them ceaſe to expect it. Mrs. Harrel, leaning upon Cecilia, continued to weep, while ſhe, confounded and alarmed, ſcarce knew whether ſhe ſhould ſtay and conſole her, or fly after Mr. Harrel, whom ſhe feared had incapacitated himſelf from finding his chaiſe, by the very method he had taken to gather courage for ſeeking it.

This, however, was but the apprehenſion of a moment; another and a far more horrible one drove it from her imagination; for ſcarcely had Mr. Harrel quitted the box and their ſight, before their ears were ſuddenly ſtruck with the report of a piſtol.

Mrs. Harrel gave a loud ſcream, which was involuntarily echoed by Cecilia; every body aroſe, ſome with officious zeal to ſerve the ladies, and others to haſten to the ſpot whence the dreadful ſound proceeded.

Sir Robert Floyer again offered his ſervices in conducting them home; but they could liſten to no ſuch propoſal: Cecilia with difficulty reſtrained from ruſhing out herſelf to diſcover what was paſſing; but her dread of being followed by Mrs. Harrel prevented her; they both, therefore, waited, expecting every inſtant ſome intelligence, as all but the Baronet and Mr. Marriot were now gone to ſeek it.

Nobody, however, returned; and their terrors encreaſed every moment: Mrs. Harrel wanted to run out herſelf, but Cecilia, conjuring her to keep ſtill, begged Mr. Marriot to bring them ſome account. Mr. Marriot, like the meſſengers who had preceded him, came not back: an inſtant ſeemed an age, and Sir Robert Floyer was alſo entreated to procure information.

Mrs. Harrel and Cecilia were now left to themſelves, and their horror was too great for ſpeech or motion: they ſtood cloſe to each other, liſtening to every ſound, and receiving every poſſible addition to their alarm, by the general confuſion which they obſerved in the gardens, in which, though both gentlemen and waiters were running to and fro, not a creature was walking, and all amuſement ſeemed forgotten.

From this dreadful ſtate they were at length removed, though not relieved, by the ſight of a waiter, who, as he was paſſing, ſhewed himſelf almoſt covered with blood! Mrs. Harrel vehemently called after him, demanding whence it came. "From the gentleman, ma'am," anſwered he in haſte, "that has ſhot himſelf," and then ran on.

Mrs. Harrel uttered a piercing ſcream, and ſunk on the ground; for Cecilia, ſhuddering with horror, loſt all her own ſtrength, and could no longer lend her any ſupport.

So great at this time was the general confuſion of the place, that for ſome minutes their particular diſtreſs was unknown, and their ſituation unnoticed; till at length an elderly gentleman came up to the box, and humanely offered his aſſiſtance.

Cecilia, pointing to her unfortunate friend, who had not fallen into a fainting fit, but merely from weakneſs and terror, accepted his help in raiſing her. She was lifted up, however, without the ſmalleſt effort on her own part, and was only kept upon her feet by being held there by the ſtranger; for Cecilia, whoſe whole frame was ſhaking, tried in vain to ſuſtain her.

This gentleman, from the violence of their diſtreſs, began now to ſuſpect its motive, and addreſſing himſelf to Cecilia, ſaid, "I am afraid, madam, this unfortunate gentleman was ſome relation to you?"

Neither of them ſpoke, but their ſilence was ſufficiently expreſſive.

"It is pity, madam," he continued, "that ſome friend can't order him out of the [illegible] crowd.

crowd, and have him kept quiet till a ſurgeon can be brought."

"A ſurgeon!" exclaimed Cecilia, recovering from one ſurpriſe by the effect of another, "is it then poſſible he may be ſaved!"

And without waiting to have her queſtion anſwered, ſhe ran out of the box herſelf, flying wildly about the garden, and calling for help as ſhe flew, till ſhe found the houſe by the entrance; and then going up to the bar, "Is a ſurgeon ſent for?" ſhe exclaimed, "let a ſurgeon be fetched inſtantly!" "A ſurgeon, ma'am," ſhe was anſwered, "is not the gentleman dead?" "No, no, no!" ſhe cried; "he muſt be brought in; let ſome careful people go and bring him in." Nor would ſhe quit the bar, till two or three waiters were called, and received her orders. And then, eager to ſee them executed herſelf, ſhe ran, fearleſs of being alone, and without thought of being loſt, towards the fatal ſpot whither the crowd guided her. She could not, indeed, have been more ſecure from inſult or moleſtation if ſurrounded by twenty guards; for the ſcene of deſperation and horror which many had witneſſed, and of which all had heard the ſignal, engroſſed the univerſal attention, and took, even from the moſt idle and licentious, all ſpirit for gallantry and amuſement.

Here, while making vain attempts to penetrate through the multitude, that ſhe might ſee and herſelf judge the actual ſituation of Mr. Harrel, and give, if yet there was room for hope, ſuch orders as would beſt conduce to his ſafety and recovery, ſhe was met by Mr. Marriot, who entreated her not to preſs forward to a ſight which he had found too ſhocking for himſelf, and inſiſted upon protecting her through the crowd.

"If he is alive," cried ſhe, refuſing his aid, "and if there is any chance he may be ſaved, no ſight ſhall be too ſhocking to deter me from ſeeing him properly attended."

"All attendance," anſwered he, "will be in vain; he is not, indeed, yet dead, but his recovery is impoſſible. There is a ſurgeon with him already; one who happened to be in the gardens, and he told me himſelf, that the wound was inevitably mortal."

Cecilia, though greatly diſappointed, ſtill determined to make way to him, that ſhe might herſelf enquire if in his laſt moments there was any thing he wiſhed to communicate, or deſired to have done: but, as ſhe ſtruggled to proceed, ſhe was next met and ſtopt by Sir Robert Floyer, who, forcing her back, acquainted her that all was over!

The ſhock with which ſhe received this account, though unmixed with any tenderneſs of regret, and reſulting merely from general humanity, was yet ſo violent as almoſt to overpower her. Mr. Harrel, indeed, had forfeited all right to her eſteem, and the unfeeling

feeling ſelfiſhneſs of his whole behaviour had long provoked her reſentment and excited her diſguſt; yet a cataſtrophe ſo dreadful, and from which ſhe had herſelf made ſuch efforts to reſcue him, filled her with ſo much horror, that, turning extremely ſick, ſhe was obliged to be ſupported to the neareſt box, and ſtop there for hartſhorn and water.

A few minutes, however, ſufficed to diveſt her of all care for herſelf, in the concern with which ſhe recollected the ſituation of Mrs. Harrel; ſhe haſtened, therefore, back to her, attended by the Baronet and Mr. Marriot, and found her ſtill leaning upon the ſtranger, and weeping aloud.

The fatal news had already reached her; and though all affection between Mr. Harrel and herſelf had mutually ſubſided from the firſt two or three months of their marriage, a concluſion ſo horrible to all connection between them could not be heard without ſorrow and diſtreſs. Her temper, too, naturally ſoft, retained not reſentment, and Mr. Harrel, now ſeparated from her for ever, was only remembered as the Mr. Harrel who firſt won her heart.

Neither pains nor tenderneſs were ſpared on the part of Cecilia to conſole her; who finding her utterly incapable either of acting or directing for herſelf, and knowing her at all times to be extremely helpleſs, now ſummoned to her own aid all the ſtrength of mind ſhe poſſeſſed, and determined, upon this melancholy occaſion, both to think and act for her widowed friend to the utmoſt ſtretch of her abilities and power.

As ſoon, therefore, as the firſt effuſions of her grief was over, ſhe prevailed with her to go to the houſe, where ſhe was humanely offered the uſe of a quiet room till ſhe ſhould be better able to ſet off for town.

Cecilia, having ſeen her thus ſafely lodged, begged Mr. Marriot to ſtay with her, and then, accompanied by the Baronet, returned herſelf to the bar, and deſiring the footman who had attended them to be called, ſent him inſtantly to his late maſter, and proceeded next, with great preſence of mind, to inquire farther into the particulars of what had paſſed, and to conſult upon what was immediately to be done with the deceaſed: for ſhe thought it neither decent nor right to leave to chance or to ſtrangers the laſt duties which could be paid him.

He had lingered, ſhe found, about a quarter of an hour, but in a condition too dreadful for deſcription, quite ſpeechleſs, and, by all that could be judged, out of his ſenſes; yet ſo diſtorted with pain, and wounded ſo deſperately beyond any power of relief, that the ſurgeon, who every inſtant expected his death, ſaid it would not be merely uſeleſs but inhuman, to remove him till he had breathed his laſt. He died, therefore, in the arms of this gentleman and a waiter.

"A waiter!" cried Cecilia, reproachfully looking at Sir Robert, "and was there no friend who, for the few poor moments that remained, had patience to ſupport him!"

"Where would be the good," ſaid Sir Robert, "of ſupporting a man in his laſt agonies?"

This unfeeling ſpeech ſhe attempted not to anſwer; but, ſuffering neither her diſlike to him, nor her ſcruples for herſelf, to interfere with the preſent occaſion, ſhe deſired to have his advice what was now beſt to be done.

Undertaker's men muſt immediately, he ſaid, be ſent for, to remove the body.

She then gave orders for that purpoſe, which were inſtantly executed.

Whither the body was to go was the next queſtion: Cecilia wiſhed the removal to be directly to the town-houſe, but Sir Robert told her it muſt be carried to the neareſt undertaker's, and kept there till it could be conveyed to town in a coffin.

For this, alſo, in the name of Mrs. Harrel, ſhe gave directions. And then addreſſing herſelf to Sir Robert, "You will now, Sir, I hope," ſhe ſaid, "return to the fatal ſpot, and watch by your late unfortunate friend, till the proper people arrive to take charge of him?"

"And what good will that do?" cried he, "had I not better watch by you?"

"It will do good," anſwered ſhe, with ſome ſeverity, "to decency and to humanity; and ſurely you cannot refuſe to ſee who is with him, and in what ſituation he lies, and whether he has met, from the ſtrangers with whom he was left, the tenderneſs and care which his friends ought to have paid him."

"Will you promiſe, then," he anſwered, "not to go away till I come back? for I have no great ambition to ſacrifice the living for the dead."

"I will promiſe nothing, Sir," ſaid ſhe, ſhocked at his callous inſenſibility; "but if you refuſe this laſt poor office, I muſt apply elſewhere; and ſurely I believe there is no other I can aſk who will a moment heſitate in complying."

She then went back to Mrs. Harrel, leaving, however, an impreſſion upon the mind of Sir Robert that made him no longer dare diſpute her commands.

Her next ſolicitude was how they ſhould return to town; they had no equipage of their own, and the only ſervant who came with them was employed in performing the laſt duties for his deceaſed maſter. Her firſt intention was to order a hackney coach, but the deplorable ſtate of Mrs. Harrel made it almoſt impoſſible ſhe could take the ſole care of her, and the lateneſs of the night, and their diſtance from home, gave her a dread invincible to going ſo far without ſome guard or aſſiſtant. Mr. Marriot earneſtly deſired to have the honour of conveying them to Portman Square in his own carriage, and notwithſtanding there were many objections to ſuch a propoſal, the humanity of his behaviour upon the preſent occaſion, and the evident veneration which accompanied his paſſion, joined to her encreaſing averſion to the Baronet, from whom ſhe could not endure to receive the ſmalleſt obligation, determined her, after much perplexity and heſitation, to accept his offer.

She begged him, therefore, to immediately order his coach; and, happy to obey her, he went out with that deſign; but, inſtantly coming back, told her, in a low voice, that they muſt wait ſome time longer, as the undertaker's people were then entering the garden, and if they ſtayed not till the removal had taken place, Mrs. Harrel might be ſhocked with the ſight of ſome of the men, or perhaps even meet the dead body.

Cecilia, thanking him for this conſiderate precaution, readily agreed to defer ſetting out; devoting, mean time, all her attention to Mrs. Harrel, whoſe ſorrow, though violent, forbad not conſolation. But before the garden was cleared, and the carriage ordered, Sir Robert returned; ſaying to Cecilia, with an air of parading obedience which ſeemed to claim ſome applauſe, "Miſs Beverley, your commands have been executed."

Cecilia made not any anſwer, and he preſently added, "Whenever you chuſe to go I will order up my coach."

"*My* coach, Sir," ſaid Mr. Marriot, "will be ordered when the ladies are ready, and I hope to have the honour myſelf of conducting them to town."

"No, Sir," cried the Baronet, "that can never be; my long acquaintance with Mrs. Harrel gives me a prior right to attend her; and I can by no means ſuffer any other perſon to rob me of it."

"I have nothing," ſaid Mr. Marriot, "to ſay to that, Sir; but Miſs Beverley herſelf has done me the honour to conſent to make uſe of my carriage."

"Miſs Beverley, I think," ſaid Sir Robert, extremely piqued, "can never have ſent me out of the way in order to execute her own commands, merely to deprive me of the pleaſure of attending her and Mrs. Harrel home."

Cecilia, ſomewhat alarmed, now ſought to leſſen the favour of her deciſion, though ſhe adhered to it without wavering.

"My intention," ſaid ſhe, "was not to confer, but to receive an obligation; and I had hoped, while Mr. Marriot aſſiſted us, Sir Robert would be far more humanely employed in taking charge of what we cannot ſuperintend, and yet are infinitely more anxious ſhould not be neglected."

"That," ſaid Sir Robert, "is all done; and I hope, therefore, after ſending me upon ſuch an errand, you don't mean to refuſe me the pleaſure of ſeeing you to town?"

"Sir Robert," ſaid Cecilia, greatly diſpleaſed, "I cannot argue with you now; I have already ſettled my plan, and I am not at leiſure to re-conſider it."

Sir Robert bit his lips for a moment in angry ſilence; but not enduring to loſe the victory to a young rival he deſpiſed, he preſently ſaid, "If I muſt talk no more about it to you, madam, I muſt at leaſt beg leave to talk of it to this gentleman, and take the liberty to repreſent to him—"

Cecilia now, dreading how his ſpeech might be anſwered, prevented its being finiſhed, and with an air of the moſt ſpirited dignity, ſaid, "Is it poſſible, Sir, that at a time ſuch as this, you ſhould not be wholly indifferent to a matter ſo frivolous? little indeed will be the pleaſure which our ſociety can afford! your diſpute, however, has given it ſome importance, and therefore Mr. Marriot muſt accept my thanks for his civility, and excuſe me for retracting my conſent."

Supplications and remonſtrances were, however, ſtill poured upon her from both, and the danger, the impoſſibility that two ladies could go to town alone, in a hackney coach, and without even a ſervant, at near four o'clock in the morning, they mutually urged, vehemently entreating that ſhe would run no ſuch hazard.

Cecilia was far other than inſenſible to theſe repreſentations: the danger, indeed, appeared to her ſo formidable, that her inclination the whole time oppoſed her refuſal; yet her repugnance to giving way to the overbearing Baronet, and her fear of his reſentment if ſhe liſtened to Mr. Marriot, forced her to be ſteady, ſince ſhe ſaw that her preference would prove the ſignal of a quarrel.

Inattentive, therefore, to their joint perſecution, ſhe again deliberated by what poſſible method ſhe could get home in ſafety; but unable to deviſe any, ſhe at laſt reſolved to make enquiries of the people in the bar, who had been extremely humane and civil, whether they could aſſiſt or counſel her. She therefore deſired the two gentlemen to take care of Mrs. Harrel, to which neither dared diſſent, as both could not refuſe, and haſtily ariſing, went out of the room: but great indeed was her ſurpriſe when, as ſhe was walking up to the bar, ſhe was addreſſed by young Delvile!

Approaching her with that air of gravity and diſtance which of late he had aſſumed in her preſence, he was beginning ſome ſpeech about his mother; but the inſtant the ſound of his voice reached Cecilia, ſhe joyfully claſped her hands, and eagerly exclaimed, "Mr. Delvile!—O now we are ſafe!—this is fortunate indeed!"

"Safe, madam," cried he, aſtoniſhed, "yes, I hope ſo!—Has any thing endangered your ſafety?"

"O no matter for danger," cried ſhe; "we will now truſt ourſelves with you, and I am ſure you will protect us."

"Protect you!" repeated he again, and with warmth, "yes, while I live!—But what is the matter?—why are you ſo pale?—are you ill?—are you frightened?—what is the matter?"

And loſing all coldneſs and reſerve, with the utmoſt earneſtneſs he begged her to explain herſelf.

"Do you not know," cried ſhe, "what has happened? Can you be here, and not have heard it?"

"Heard what?" cried he; "I am but this moment arrived: my mother grew uneaſy that ſhe did not ſee you; ſhe ſent to your houſe, and was told that you were not returned from Vauxhall; ſome other circumſtances alſo alarmed her, and therefore, late as it was, I came hither myſelf. The inſtant I entered this place, I ſaw you here. This is all my hiſtory; tell me now yours. Where is your party? where are Mr. and Mrs. Harrel?—Why are you alone?"

"O aſk not!" cried ſhe, "I cannot tell

you!—take us but under your care, and you will ſoon know all."

She then hurried from him, and returning to Mrs. Harrel, ſaid ſhe had now a conveyance at once ſafe and proper, and begged her to riſe and come away.

The gentlemen, however, roſe firſt, each of them declaring he would himſelf attend them.

"No," ſaid Cecilia, ſteadily, "that trouble will now be ſuperfluous: Mrs. Delvile herſelf has ſent for me, and her ſon is now waiting till we join him."

Amazement and diſappointment at this intelligence were viſible in the faces of them both: Cecilia waited not a ſingle queſtion, but finding ſhe was unable to ſupport Mrs. Harrel, who rather ſuffered herſelf to be carried than led, ſhe entruſted her between them, and ran forward to enquire of Delvile if his carriage was ready.

She found him with a look of horror that told the tale he had been hearing, liſtening to one of the waiters: the moment ſhe appeared, he flew to her, and with the utmoſt emotion exclaimed, "Amiable Miſs Beverley! what a dreadful ſcene have you witneſſed! what a cruel taſk have you nobly performed! ſuch ſpirit with ſuch ſoftneſs! ſo much preſence of mind with ſuch feeling!—But you are all excellence! human nature can riſe no higher! I be-

I believe indeed you are its moſt perfect ornament!"

Praiſe ſuch as this, ſo unexpected, and delivered with ſuch energy, Cecilia heard not without pleaſure, even at a moment when her whole mind was occupied by matters foreign to its peculiar intereſts. She made, however, her enquiry about the carriage, and he told her that he had come in a hackney coach, which was waiting for him at the door.

Mrs. Harrel was now brought in, and little was the recompence her aſſiſtants received for their aid, when they ſaw Cecilia ſo contentedly engaged with young Delvile, whoſe eyes were rivetted on her face, with an expreſſion of the moſt lively admiration: each, however, then quitted the other, and haſtened to the fair mourner; no time was now loſt, Mrs. Harrel was ſupported to the coach, Cecilia followed her, and Delvile, jumping in after them, ordered the man to drive to Portman-Square.

Sir Robert and Mr. Marriot, confounded though enraged, ſaw their departure in paſſive ſilence: the right of attendance they had ſo tenaciouſly denied to each other, here admitted not of diſpute: Delvile upon this occaſion appeared as the repreſentative of his father, and his authority ſeemed the authority of a guardian. Their only conſolation was, that neither had yielded to the other, and all ſpirit of altercation or revenge was

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ſunk in their mutual mortification. At the petition of the waiters, from ſullen but proud emulation, they paid the expences of the night; and then throwing themſelves into their carriages, returned to their reſpective houſes.

CHAP. VII.

A SOLUTION.

DURING the ride to town, not merely Cecilia, but Delvile himſelf attended wholly to Mrs. Harrel, whoſe grief, as it became leſs violent, was more eaſy to be ſoothed.

The diſtreſs of this eventful night was however not yet over; when they came to Portman-Square, Delvile eagerly called to the coachman not to drive up to the houſe, and anxiouſly begged Cecilia and Mrs. Harrel to ſit ſtill, while he went out himſelf to make ſome enquiries. They were ſurpriſed at the requeſt, yet immediately conſented; but before he had quitted them, Daviſon, who was watching their return, came up to them with information that an execution was then in the houſe.

Freſh miſery was now opened for Mrs.

Harrel, and freſh horror and perplexity for Cecilia. She had no longer, however, the whole weight either of thought or of conduct upon herſelf; Delvile in her cares took the moſt animated intereſt; and beſeeching her to wait a moment and appeaſe her friend, he went himſelf into the houſe to learn the ſtate of the affair.

He returned in a few minutes, and ſeemed in no haſte to communicate what he had heard, but entreated them both to go immediately to St. James's Square.

Cecilia felt extremely fearful of offending his father by the introduction of Mrs. Harrel; yet ſhe had nothing better to propoſe, and therefore, after a ſhort and diſtreſſed argument, ſhe complied.

Delvile then told her that the alarm of his mother, at which he had already hinted, proceeded from a rumour of this very misfortune, to which, though they knew not whether they might give credit, was owing the anxiety which, at ſo late an hour, had induced him to go to Vauxhall in ſearch of her.

They gained admittance without any diſturbance, as the ſervant of young Delvile had been ordered to ſit up for his maſter. Cecilia much diſliked thus taking poſſeſſion of the houſe in the night-time, though Delvile, ſolicitous to relieve her, deſired ſhe would not waſte a thought upon the ſubject, and making his ſervant ſhew her the room which had been prepared for her reception, he begged her to compoſe her ſpirits, and to comfort her friend, and promiſed to acquaint his father and mother, when they aroſe, with what had happened, that ſhe might be ſaved all pain from ſurpriſe or curioſity when they met.

This ſervice ſhe thankfully accepted, for ſhe dreaded, after the liberty ſhe had taken, to encounter the pride of Mr. Delvile without ſome previous apology; and ſhe feared ſtill more to ſee his lady without the ſame preparation, as her frequent breach of appointment might reaſonably have offended her, and as her diſpleaſure would affect her more deeply.

It was now near ſix o'clock, yet the hours ſeemed as long as they were melancholy till the family aroſe. They ſettled to remain quiet till ſome meſſage was ſent to them; but before any arrived, Mrs. Harrel, who was ſeated upon the bed, wearied by fatigue and ſorrow, cried herſelf to ſleep like a child.

Cecilia rejoiced in ſeeing this reprieve from affliction, though her keener ſenſations unfitted her from partaking of it. Much indeed was the uneaſineſs which kept her awake; the care of Mrs. Harrel ſeemed to devolve upon herſelf, the reception ſhe might meet from the Delviles was uncertain, and the horrible adventures of the night refuſed for a moment to quit her remembrance.

At ten o'clock, a meſſage was brought

from Mrs. Delvile, to know whether they were ready for breakfaſt.

Mrs. Harrel was ſtill aſleep, but Cecilia carried her own anſwer by haſtening down ſtairs.

In her way ſhe was met by young Delvile, whoſe air, upon firſt approaching her, ſpoke him again prepared to addreſs her with the moſt diſtant gravity: but almoſt the moment he looked at her, he forgot his purpoſe; her paleneſs, the heavineſs of her eyes, and the fatigue of long watching betrayed by her whole face, again ſurpriſed him into all the tenderneſs of anxiety, and he enquired after her health not as a compliment of civility, but as a queſtion in which his whole heart was moſt deeply intereſted.

Cecilia thanked him for his attention to her friend the night before, and then proceeded to his mother.

Mrs. Delvile, coming forward to meet her, removed at once all her fears of diſpleaſure, and baniſhed all neceſſity of apology, by inſtantly embracing her, and warmly exclaiming, "Charming Miſs Beverley! how ſhall I ever tell you half the admiration with which I have heard of your conduct! The exertion of ſo much fortitude, at a juncture when a weaker mind would have been overpowered by terror; and a heart leſs under the dominion of well-regulated principles, would have ſought only its own relief by flying from diſtreſs and confuſion, ſhews ſuch *propriety of mind* as can only reſult from the union of good ſenſe with virtue. You are indeed a noble creature! I thought ſo from the moment I beheld you; I ſhall think ſo, I hope, to the laſt that I live!"

Cecilia, penetrated with joy and gratitude, felt in that inſtant the ampleſt recompenſe for all that ſhe had ſuffered, and for all that ſhe had loſt. Such praiſe from Mrs. Delvile was alone ſufficient to make her happy; but when ſhe conſidered whence it ſprung, and that the circumſtances with which ſhe was ſo much ſtruck, muſt have been related to her by her ſon, her delight was augmented to an emotion the moſt pleaſing ſhe could experience, from ſeeing how high ſhe was held in the eſteem of thoſe who were higheſt in her own.

Mrs. Delvile then, with the utmoſt cordiality, began to talk of her affairs, ſaving her the pain of propoſing the change of habitation that now ſeemed unavoidable, by an immediate invitation to her houſe, which ſhe made with as much delicacy as if Mr. Harrel's had ſtill been open to her, and choice, not neceſſity, had directed her removal. The whole family, ſhe told her, went into the country in two days; and ſhe hoped that a new ſcene, with quietneſs and early hours, would reſtore both the bloom and ſprightlineſs which her late cares and reſtleſſneſs had injured. And though ſhe very ſeriouſly lamented the raſh action of Mr. Harrel, ſhe much rejoiced in the acquiſition which her own houſe and happineſs would receive from her ſociety.

She next diſcuſſed the ſituation of her widowed friend, and Cecilia produced the packet which had been entruſted to her by her late huſband. Mrs. Delvile adviſed her to open it in the preſence of Mr. Arnott, and begged her to ſend for any other of her friends ſhe might wiſh to ſee or conſult, and to claim freely from herſelf whatever advice or aſſiſtance ſhe could beſtow.

And then, without waiting for Mr. Delvile, ſhe ſuffered her to ſwallow a haſty breakfaſt, and return to Mrs. Harrel, whom ſhe had deſired the ſervants to attend, as ſhe concluded that in her preſent ſituation ſhe would not chuſe to make her appearance.

Cecilia, lightened now from all her own cares, more pleaſed than ever with Mrs. Delvile, and enchanted that at laſt ſhe was ſettled under her roof, went back with as much ability as inclination to give comfort to Mrs. Harrel. She found her but juſt awaking, and ſcarce yet conſcious where ſhe was, or why not in her own houſe.

As her powers of recollection returned, ſhe was ſoothed with the ſofteſt compaſſion by Cecilia, who, in purſuance of Mrs. Delvile's advice, ſent her ſervant in ſearch of Mr. Arnott, and in conſequence of her permiſſion, wrote a note of invitation to Mr. Monckton.

Mr. Arnott, who was already in town, ſoon arrived; his own man, whom he had left to watch the motions of Mr. Harrel, having early in the morning rode to the place of his retreat, with the melancholy tidings of the ſuicide and execution.

Cecilia inſtantly went down ſtairs to him. The meeting was extremely painful to them both. Mr. Arnott ſeverely blamed himſelf for his flight, believing it had haſtened the fatal blow, which ſome farther ſacrifices might perhaps have eluded; and Cecilia half repented the advice ſhe had given him, though the failure of her own efforts proved the ſituation of Mr. Harrel too deſperate for remedy.

He then made the tendereſt enquiries about his ſiſter, and entreated her to communicate to him the minuteſt particulars of the dreadful tranſaction: after which, ſhe produced the packet, but neither of them had the courage to break the ſeal; and concluding the contents would be no leſs than his laſt will, they determined ſome third perſon ſhould be preſent when they opened it. Cecilia wiſhed much for Mr. Monckton, but as his being immediately found was uncertain, and the packet might conſiſt of orders which ought not to be delayed, ſhe propoſed, for the ſake of expedition, to call in Mr. Delvile.

Mr. Arnott readily agreed, and ſhe ſent

to beg a moment's audience with that gentleman.

She was deſired to walk into the breakfaſt-room, where he was ſitting with his lady and his ſon.

Not ſuch was now her reception as when ſhe entered that apartment before. Mr. Delvile looked diſpleaſed and out of humour, and, making her a ſtiff bow, while his ſon brought her a chair, coldly ſaid, "If you are hurried, Miſs Beverley, I will attend you directly; if not, I will finiſh my breakfaſt, as I ſhall have but little time the reſt of the morning, from the concourſe of people upon buſineſs, who will crowd upon me till dinner, moſt of whom will be extremely diſtreſſed if I leave town without contriving to ſee them."

"There is not the leaſt occaſion, Sir," anſwered Cecilia, "that I ſhould trouble you to quit the room: I merely came to beg you would have the goodneſs to be preſent, while Mr. Arnott opens a ſmall packet which was laſt night put into my hands by Mr. Harrel."

"And has Mr. Arnott," anſwered he, ſomewhat ſternly, "thought proper to ſend me ſuch a requeſt?"

"No, Sir," ſaid Cecilia, "the requeſt is mine; and if, as I now fear, it is impertinent, I muſt entreat you to forget it."

"As far as relates merely to yourſelf," returned Mr. Delvile, "it is another matter; but certainly Mr. Arnott can have no poſſible claim upon my time or attention; and I think it rather extraordinary, that a young man with whom I have no ſort of connection or commerce, and whoſe very name is almoſt unknown to me, ſhould ſuppoſe a perſon in my ſtile of life ſo little occupied as to be wholly at his command."

"He had no ſuch idea, Sir," ſaid Cecilia, greatly diſconcerted; "the honour of your preſence is merely ſolicited by myſelf, and ſimply from the apprehenſion that ſome directions may be contained in the papers, which, perhaps, ought immediately to be executed."

"I am not, I repeat," ſaid Mr. Delvile, more mildly, "diſpleaſed at your part of this tranſaction; your want of experience and knowledge of the world makes you not at all aware of the conſequences which may follow my compliance: the papers you ſpeak of may perhaps be of great importance, and hereafter the firſt witneſſes to their being read may be publicly called upon. You know not the trouble ſuch an affair may occaſion, but Mr. Arnott ought to be better informed."

Cecilia, making another apology for the error which ſhe had committed, was in no ſmall confuſion quitting the room; but Mr. Delvile, perfectly appeaſed by ſeeing her diſtreſs, ſtopt her, to ſay, with much graciouſneſs, "For your ſake, Miſs Beverley, I am ſorry I cannot act in this buſineſs; but you ſee how I am ſituated! overpowered with affairs of my own, and people who can do nothing without my orders. Beſides, ſhould there hereafter be any inveſtigation into the matter, my name might, perhaps, be mentioned; and it would be ſuperfluous to ſay how ill I ſhould think it uſed by being brought into ſuch company."

Cecilia then left the room, ſecretly vowing that no poſſible exigence ſhould in future tempt her to apply for aſſiſtance to Mr. Delvile, which, however oſtentatiouſly offered, was conſtantly with-held when claimed.

She was beginning to communicate to Mr. Arnott her ill ſucceſs, when young Delvile, with an air of eagerneſs, followed her into the room. "Pardon me," he cried, "for this intruſion,—but, tell me, is it impoſſible that in this affair I can repreſent my father? may not the office you meant for him, devolve upon me? remember how near we are to each other, and honour me for once with ſuppoſing us the ſame!"

Ah who, or what, thought Cecilia, can be ſo different! She thanked him, with much ſweetneſs, for his offer, but declined accepting it, ſaying, "I will not, now I know the inconveniencies of my requeſt, be ſo ſelfiſh as even to ſuffer it ſhould be granted."

"You muſt not deny me," cried he; "where is the packet? why ſhould you loſe a moment?"

"Rather aſk," anſwered ſhe, "why I ſhould permit *you* to loſe a moment in a matter that does not concern you? and to riſk, perhaps, the loſs of many moments hereafter, from a too incautious politeneſs." "And what can I riſk," cried he, "half ſo precious as your ſmalleſt ſatisfaction? Do you ſuppoſe I can flatter myſelf with a poſſibility of contributing to it, and yet have the reſolution to refuſe myſelf ſo much pleaſure? No, no, the heroic times are over, and ſelf-denial is no longer in faſhion!"

"You are very good," ſaid Cecilia; "but indeed after what has paſſed—"

"No matter for what has paſſed," interrupted he, "we are now to think of what is to come. I know you too well to doubt your impatience in the execution of a commiſſion which circumſtances have rendered ſacred; and ſhould any thing either be done or omitted contrary to the directions in your packet, will you not be apt, blameleſs as you are, to diſturb yourſelf with a thouſand fears that you took not proper methods for the diſcharge of your truſt?"

There was ſomething in this earneſtneſs ſo like his former behaviour, and ſo far removed from his late reſerve, that Cecilia, who perceived it with a pleaſure ſhe could hardly diſguiſe, now oppoſed him no longer, but took up the packet and broke the ſeal.

And, then, to her no ſmall amazement, inſtead of the expected will, ſhe found a roll of enormous bills, and a collection of letters from various creditors, threatening the utmoſt ſeverity of the law, if their demands were longer unanſwered.

Upon a ſlip of paper which held theſe together, was written, in Mr. Harrel's hand,

To be all paid to-night with a BULLET.

Next appeared two letters of another ſort; the firſt of which was from Sir Robert Floyer, and in theſe words:

SIR,

As all proſpects are now over of the alliance, I hope you will excuſe my reminding you of the affair at Brookes's of laſt Chriſtmas. I have the honour to be,

SIR, Your's,
R. FLOYER.

The other was from Mr. Marriot.

SIR,

Though I ſhould think 2000*l.* nothing for the ſmalleſt hope, I muſt take the liberty to ſay I think it a great deal for only ten minutes: you can't have forgot, Sir, the terms of our agreement, but as I find you cannot keep to them, I muſt beg to be off alſo on my ſide; and I am perſuaded you are too much a man of honour to take advantage of my over-eagerneſs in parting with my money without better ſecurity.

I am, Sir,
Your moſt humble ſervant,
A. Marriot.

What a ſcene of fraud, double-dealing, and iniquity was here laid open! Cecilia, who at firſt meant to read every thing aloud, found the attempt utterly vain, for ſo much was ſhe ſhocked, that ſhe could hardly read on to herſelf.

Laſt of all appeared a paper in Mr. Harrel's own hand-writing, containing theſe words:

For Mrs. Harrel, Miſs Beverley, and Mr. Arnott.

I can ſtruggle no longer, the laſt blow muſt now be ſtruck! another day robs me of my houſe and my liberty, and blaſts me by the fatal diſcovery of my double attempts.

This is what I have wiſhed; wholly to be freed, or ruined paſt all reſource, and driven to the long-projected remedy.

A burthen has my exiſtence been theſe two years, gay as I have appeared; not a night have I gone to bed, but heated and inflamed from a gaming table; not a morning have I awaked, but to be ſoured with a dun!

I would not lead ſuch a life again, if the ſlave who works hardeſt at the oar would change with me.

Had I a ſon, I would bequeath him a plough; I ſhould then leave him happier than my parents left me.

Idleneſs has been my deſtruction; the want of ſomething to do led me into all evil.

A good wife perhaps might have ſaved me,—mine, I thank her! tried not. Diſengaged from me and my affairs, her own pleaſures and amuſements have occupied her ſolely. Dreadful will be the cataſtrophe ſhe will ſee to-night; let her bring it home, and live better!

If any pity is felt for me, it will be where I have leaſt deſerved it! Mr. Arnott—Miſs Beverley! it will come from you!

To bring myſelf to this final reſolution, hard, I confeſs, have been my conflicts: it is not that I have feared death, no, I have long wiſhed it, for ſhame and dread have embittered my days; but ſomething there is within me that cauſes a deeper horror,—that aſks my preparation for another world! that demands my authority for quitting this!—what may hereafter—O terrible!——Pray for me, generous Miſs Beverley!——kind, gentle Mr. Arnott, pray for me!—

Wretch, as Mr. Harrel appeared, without religion, principle, or honour, this incohetent letter, evidently written in the deſperate moment of determined ſuicide, very much affected both Cecilia and Mr. Arnott; and in ſpite either of abhorrence or reſentment, they mutually ſhed tears over the addreſs to themſelves.

Delvile, to whom every part of the affair was new, could only conſider theſe papers as ſo many ſpecimens of guilt and infamy; he read them, therefore, with aſtoniſhment and deteſtation, and openly congratulated Cecilia upon having eſcaped the double ſnares that were ſpread for her.

While this was paſſing, Mr. Monckton arrived; who felt but little ſatisfaction from beholding the lady of his heart in confidential diſcourſe with two of his rivals, one of whom had long attacked her by the dangerous flattery of perſeverance, and the other, without any attack, had an influence yet more powerful.

Delvile, having performed the office for which he came, concluded, upon the entrance of Mr. Monckton, that Cecilia had nothing farther to wiſh from him; for her long acquaintance with that gentleman, his being a *married man*, and her neighbour in the country, were circumſtances well known to him: he merely therefore, enquired if ſhe would honour him with any commands, and upon her aſſuring him ſhe had none, he quietly withdrew.

This was no little relief to Mr. Monckton, into whoſe hands Cecilia then put the fatal packet; and while he was reading it, at the deſire of Mr. Arnott, ſhe went up ſtairs to prepare Mrs. Harrel for his admiſſion.

Mrs. Harrel, unuſed to ſolitude, and as eager for company when unhappy to conſole, as when eaſy to divert her, conſented to receive him with pleaſure: they both wept at the meeting; and Cecilia, after ſome words of general comfort, left them together.

She had then a very long and circumſtantial converſation with Mr. Monckton, who explained whatever had appeared dark in the writings left by Mr. Harrel, and who came to her before he ſaw them, with full knowledge of what they contained.

Mr. Harrel had contracted with Sir Robert Floyer a large debt of honour, before the arrival in town of Cecilia; and having no power to diſcharge it, he promiſed that the prize he expected in his ward ſhould fall to his ſhare, upon condition that the debt was cancelled.

Nothing was thought more eaſy than to arrange this buſineſs, for the Baronet was always to be in her way, and the report of the intended alliance was to keep off all other pretenders. Several times, however, her coldneſs made him think the matter hopeleſs; and when he received her letter, he would have given np the whole affair: but Mr. Harrel, well knowing his inability to ſatisfy the claims that would follow ſuch a defection, conſtantly perſuaded him the reſerve was affected, and that his own pride and want of aſſiduity occaſioned all her diſcouragement.

But while thus, by amuſing the Baronet with falſe hopes, he kept off his demands, thoſe of others were not leſs clamorous: his debts encreaſed, his power of paying them diminiſhed; he grew ſour and deſperate, and in one night loſt 3000*l.* beyond what he could produce or offer any ſecurity for.

This, as he ſaid, was *what he wiſhed*; and now he was, for the preſent, to extricate himſelf by doubling ſtakes and winning, or to force himſelf into ſuicide by doubling ſuch a loſs. For though, with tolerable eaſe, he could forget accounts innumerable with his tradeſmen, one neglected *debt of honour* rendered his exiſtence inſupportable!

For this laſt great effort, his difficulty was to raiſe the 3000*l.* already due, without which the propoſal could not be made; and, after various artifices and attempts, he at length contrived a meeting with Mr. Marriot, intreated him to lend him 2000 *l.* for only two days, and offered his warmeſt ſervices in his favour with Cecilia.

The raſh and impaſſioned young man, deceived by his accounts into believing that his ward was wholly at his diſpoſal, readily advanced the money, without any other condition than that of leave to viſit freely at his houſe, to the excluſion of Sir Robert Floyer. "The other 1000*l.*" continued Mr. Monckton, "I know not how he obtained, but he certainly had three. You, I hope, were not ſo unguarded——"

"Ah, Mr. Monckton," ſaid Cecilia, "blame me not too ſeverely! the attacks that were made, — the neceſſity of otherwiſe betraying the worthy and half ruined Mr. Arnott—"

"O fie!" cried he, "to ſuffer *your* underſtanding to be lulled aſleep, becauſe the weak-minded Mr. Arnott's could not be kept awake! I thought after ſuch cautions from me, and ſuch experience of your own, you could not again have been thus duped."

"I thought ſo too," anſwered ſhe; "but yet when the trial came on, — indeed you know not how I was perſecuted."

"Yet you ſee," returned he "the utter inutility of the attempt; you ſee, and I told you before-hand, that nothing could ſave him."

"True; but had I been firmer in refuſal, I might not ſo well have known it; I might then have upbraided myſelf with ſuppoſing that my compliance would have reſcued him."

"You have indeed," cried Mr. Monckton, "fallen into moſt worthleſs hands, and the Dean was much to blame for naming ſo lightly a guardian to a fortune ſuch as yours."

"Pardon me," cried Cecilia, "he never

entruſted him with my fortune, he committed it wholly to Mr. Briggs."

"But if he knew not the various ſubterfuges by which ſuch a caution might be baffled, he ought to have taken advice of thoſe who were better informed. Mr. Briggs, too! what a wretch! mean, low, vulgar, ſordid! —the whole city of London, I believe, could not produce ſuch another! how unaccountable to make you the ward of a man whoſe houſe you cannot enter without diſguſt!"

"His houſe," cried Cecilia, "my uncle never wiſhed me to enter: he believed, and he was right, that my fortune would be ſafe in his hands; but for myſelf, he concluded I ſhould always reſide at Mr. Harrel's."

"But does not the city at this time," ſaid Mr. Monckton, "abound in families where, while your fortune was in ſecurity, you might yourſelf have lived with propriety? Nothing requires circumſpection ſo minute as the choice of a guardian to a girl of large fortune; and in general one thing only is attended to, an appearance of property. Morals, integrity, character, are either not thought of, or inveſtigated ſo ſuperficially, that the enquiry were as well wholly omitted."

He then continued his relation.

Mr. Harrel, haſtened with his 3000*l.* to the gaming-table; one throw of the dice ſettled the buſineſs; he loſt, and ought immediately to have doubled the ſum. That, however,

ever, was never more likely to be in his power; he knew it; he knew, too, the joint claims of Cecilia's deceived admirers, and that his houſe was again threatened with executions from various quarters: — he went home, loaded his piſtols, and took the methods already related to work himſelf into courage for the deed.

The means by which Mr. Monckton had procured theſe particulars were many and various, and not all ſuch as he could avow; ſince, in the courſe of his reſearches, he had tampered with ſervants and waiters, and ſcrupled at no methods that led but to diſcovery.

Nor did this intelligence ſtop here. He had often, he ſaid, wondered at the patience of Mr. Harrel's creditors, but now even that was cleared up by a freſh proof of infamy: he had been himſelf at the houſe in Portman-Square, where he was informed that Mr. Harrel had kept them quiet, by repeated aſſurances that his ward, in a ſhort time, meant to lend him money for diſcharging them all.

Cecilia ſaw now but too clearly the reaſon her ſtay in his houſe was ſo important to him; and wondered leſs at his vehemence upon that ſubject, though ſhe deteſted it more.

"Oh how little," cried ſhe, "are the gay and the diſſipated to be known upon a ſhort acquaintance! Expenſive, indeed, and thoughtleſs and luxurious he appeared to me immediately; but fraudulent, baſe, deſigning, capable of every pernicious art of treachery and duplicity,—ſuch, indeed, I expected not to find him; his very flightineſs and levity ſeemed incompatible with ſuch hypocriſy."

"His flightineſs," ſaid Mr. Monckton, "proceeded not from gaiety of heart, it was merely the effect of effort; and his ſpirits were as mechanical as his taſte for diverſion. He had not ſtrong parts, nor were his vices the reſult of his paſſions; had œconomy been as much in faſhion as extravagance, he would have been equally eager to practiſe it; he was a mere time-ſerver, he ſtruggled but to be *ſomething*, and having neither talents nor ſentiment to know *what*, he looked around him for any purſuit, and ſeeing diſtinction was more eaſily attained in the road to ruin than in any other, he galloped along it, thoughtleſs of being thrown when he came to the bottom, and ſufficiently gratified in ſhewing his horſemanſhip by the way."

And now, all that he had either to hear or to communicate upon this ſubject being told, he enquired, with a face ſtrongly expreſſive of his diſapprobation, why he found her at Mr. Delvile's, and what had become of her reſolution to avoid his houſe?

Cecilia, who, in the hurry of her mind and her affairs, had wholly forgotten that ſuch a reſolution had been taken, bluſhed at the queſtion, and could not, at firſt, recollect what had urged her to break it: but when he proceeded to mention Mr. Briggs, ſhe was no longer diſtreſſed; ſhe gave a circumſtantial account of her viſit to him, related the mean miſery in which he lived, and told him the impracticability of her reſiding in ſuch a houſe.

Mr. Monckton could now in decency make no farther oppoſition, however painful and reluctant was his acquieſcence: yet before he quitted her, he gave himſelf the conſolation of conſiderably obliging her, and ſoftened his chagrin by the ſweetneſs of her acknowledgments.

He enquired how much money in all ſhe had now taken up of the Jew; and hearing it was 9050*l.* he repreſented to her the additional loſs ſhe muſt ſuffer by paying an exorbitant intereſt for ſo large a ſum, and the almoſt certainty with which ſhe might be aſſured of very groſs impoſition: he expatiated, alſo, upon the injury which her character might receive in the world, were it known that ſhe uſed ſuch methods to procure money, ſince the circumſtances which had been her inducement would probably either be unnoticed or miſrepreſented; and when he had awakened in her much uneaſineſs and regret upon this ſubject, he offered to pay the Jew without delay, clear her wholly from his power, and quietly receive the money when ſhe came of age from herſelf.

A propoſal ſo truly friendly made her look upon the regard of Mr. Monckton in a higher and nobler point of view than her utmoſt eſteem and reverence had hitherto placed it: yet ſhe declined at firſt accepting the offer, from an apprehenſion it might occaſion him inconvenience; but when he aſſured her he had a yet larger ſum lying at preſent uſeleſs in a banker's hands, and promiſed to receive the ſame intereſt for his money he ſhould be paid from the funds, ſhe joyfully liſtened to him; and it was ſettled that they ſhould ſend for the Jew, take his diſcharge, and utterly diſmiſs him.

Mr. Monckton, however, fearful of appearing too officious in her affairs, wiſhed not to have his part in the tranſaction publiſhed, and adviſed Cecilia not to reveal the matter to the Delviles. But great as was his aſcendant over her mind, her averſion to myſtery and hypocriſy were ſtill greater; ſhe would not, therefore, give him this promiſe, though her own deſire to wait ſome ſeaſonable opportunity for diſcloſing it, made her conſent that their meeting with the Jew ſhould be at the houſe of Mrs. Roberts in Fetter-lane, at twelve o'clock the next morning; where ſhe might alſo ſee Mrs. Hill and her children before ſhe left town.

They now parted, Cecilia charmed more than ever with her friend, whoſe kindneſs, as ſhe ſuſpected not his motives, ſeemed to ſpring from the moſt diſintereſted generoſity.

That, however, was the ſmalleſt feature in the character of Mr. Monckton, who was entirely a man of the world, ſhrewd, penetrating, attentive to his intereſt, and watchful of every advantage to improve it. In the ſervice he now did Cecilia, he was gratified by giving her pleaſure, but that was by no means his only gratification; he ſtill hoped her fortune would one day be his own, he was glad to tranſact any buſineſs with her, and happy in making her owe to him an obligation: but his principal inducement was yet ſtronger: he ſaw with much alarm the facility of her liberality; and he feared while ſhe continued in correſpondence with the Jew, that the eaſineſs with which ſhe could raiſe money would be a motive with her to continue the practice whenever ſhe was ſoftened by diſtreſs, or ſubdued by entreaty: but he hoped, by totally concluding the negociation, the temptation would be removed: and that the hazard and inconvenience of renewing it, would ſtrengthen her averſion to ſuch an expedient, till, between difficulties and diſuſe, that dangerous reſource would be thought of no more.

Cecilia then returned to Mrs. Harrel, whom ſhe found as ſhe had left, weeping in the arms of her brother. They conſulted upon what was beſt to be done, and agreed that ſhe ought inſtantly to leave town; for which purpoſe a chaiſe was ordered directly. They ſettled alſo that Mr. Arnott, when he had conveyed her to his country houſe, which was in Suffolk, ſhould haſten back to ſuperintend the funeral, and ſee if any thing could be ſaved from the creditors for his ſiſter.

Yet this plan, till Cecilia was ſummoned to dinner, they had not the reſolution to put in practice. They were then obliged to be gone, and their parting was very melancholy. Mrs. Harrel wept immoderately, and Mr. Arnott felt a concern too tender for avowal, though too ſincere for concealment. Cecilia, however glad to change her ſituation, was extremely depreſſed by their ſorrow, and entreated to have frequent accounts of their proceedings, warmly repeating her offers of ſervice, and proteſtations of faithful regard.

She accompanied them to the chaiſe, and then went to the dining parlour, where ſhe found Mr. and Mrs. Delvile, but ſaw nothing more of their ſon the whole day.

The next morning after breakfaſt, Mrs. Delvile ſet out upon ſome leave-taking viſits, and Cecilia went in a chair to Fetter-lane: here, already waiting for her, ſhe met the punctual Mr. Monckton, and the diſappointed Jew, who moſt unwillingly was paid off, and relinquiſhed his bonds; and who found in the ſevere and crafty Mr. Monckton, another ſort of man to deal with than the neceſſitous and heedleſs Mr. Harrel.

As ſoon as he was diſmiſſed, other bonds were drawn and ſigned, the old ones were deſtroyed; and Cecilia, to her infinite ſatisfaction, had no creditor but Mr. Monckton. Her bookſeller, indeed, was ſtill unpaid, but her debt with him was public, and gave her not any uneaſineſs.

She now, with the warmeſt expreſſions of gratitude, took leave of Mr. Monckton, who ſuffered the moſt painful ſtruggles in repreſſing the various apprehenſions to which the parting, and her eſtabliſhment at the Delviles gave riſe.

She then enquired briefly into the affairs of Mrs. Hill, and having heard a ſatisfactory account of them, returned to St. James's-Square.

CHAP. VIII.

A DEBATE.

IT was ſtill early, and Mrs. Delvile was not expected till late. Cecilia, therefore, determined to make a viſit to Miſs Belfield, to whom ſhe had been denied during the late diſorders at Mr. Harrel's, and whom ſhe could not endure to mortify by quitting town without ſeeing, ſince whatever were her doubts about Delvile, of her ſhe had none.

To Portland-Street, therefore, ſhe ordered her chair, deliberating as ſhe went whether it were better to adhere to the reſerve ſhe had hitherto maintained, or to ſatisfy her perplexity at once by an inveſtigation into the truth. And ſtill were theſe ſcruples undecided, when, looking in at the windows as ſhe paſſed them to the door of the houſe, ſhe perceived Miſs Belfield ſtanding in the parlour with a letter in her hand which ſhe was fervently preſſing to her lips.

Struck by this ſight, a thouſand painful conjectures occurred to her, all repreſenting that the letter was from Delvile, and all explaining to his diſhonour the myſtery of his late eonduct. And far were her ſuſpicions from diminiſhing, when, upon being ſhewn into the parlour, Miſs Belfield, trembling with her eagerneſs to hide it, haſtily forced the letter into her pocket.

Cecilia, ſurpriſed, diſmayed, alarmed, ſtopt involuntarily at the door; but Miſs Belfield, having ſecured what was ſo evidently precious to her, advanced, though not without bluſhing, and taking her hand, ſaid, "How good this is of you, madam, to come to me! when I did not know where to find you, and when

I was almoſt afraid I ſhould have found you no more!"

She then told her, that the firſt news ſhe had heard the preceding morning, was the violent death of Mr. Harrel, which had been related to her, with all its circumſtances, by the landlord of their lodgings, who was himſelf one of his principal creditors, and had immediately been at Portman-Square to put in his claims; where he had learnt that all the family had quitted the houſe, which was entirely occupied by bailiffs. "And I was ſo ſorry," ſhe continued, "that *you* ſhould meet with any hardſhips, and not know where to go, and have another home to ſeek, when I am ſure the commoneſt beggar would never want an habitation, if you had one in your power to give him!—But how ſad and melancholy you look! I am afraid this bad action of Mr. Harrel has made you quite unhappy? Ah, madam! you are too good for this guilty world! your own compaſſion and benevolence will not ſuffer you to reſt in it!"

Cecilia, touched by this tender miſtake of her preſent uneaſineſs, embraced her, and with much kindneſs anſwered, "No, ſweet Henrietta! it is *you* who are good, who are innocent, who are guileleſs!—*you*, too, I hope are happy!"

"And are not you, madam?" cried Henrietta, fondly returning her careſſes. "Oh if you are not, who will ever deſerve to be!

I think I ſhould rather be unhappy myſelf, than ſee you ſo; at leaſt I am ſure I ought, for the whole world may be the better for your welfare, and as to me,—who would care what became of me!"

"Ah, Henrietta!" cried Cecilia, "do you ſpeak ſincerely? do you indeed think yourſelf ſo little valued?"

"Why I don't ſay," anſwered ſhe, "but that I hope there are ſome who think a little kindly of me, for if I had not that hope, I ſhould wiſh to break my heart and die! but what is that to the love and reverence ſo many have for you?"

"Suppoſe," ſaid Cecilia, with a forced ſmile, "I ſhould put *your* love and reverence to the proof? do you think they would ſtand it?"

"O yes, indeed I do! and I have wiſhed a thouſand and a thouſand times that I could but ſhew you my affection, and let you ſee that I did not love you becauſe you were a great lady, and high in the world, and full of power to do me ſervice, but becauſe you were ſo good and ſo kind, ſo gentle to the unfortunate, and ſo ſweet to every body!"

"Hold, hold," cried Cecilia, "and let me try if indeed, fairly and truly, you will anſwer what I mean to aſk."

"O yes," cried ſhe warmly, "if it is the deareſt ſecret I have in the world! there is nothing I will not tell you; I will open my whole heart to you, and I ſhall be proud to think you will let me truſt you,—for I am ſure if you did not care a little for me, you would not take ſuch a trouble."

"You are indeed a ſweet creature!" ſaid Cecilia, heſitating whether or not to take advantage of her frankneſs, "and every time I ſee you, I love you better. For the world would I not injure you,—and perhaps your confidence—I know not, indeed, if it is fair or right to exact it—" ſhe ſtopt, extremely perplext, and while Henrietta waited her farther enquiries, they were interrupted by the entrance of Mrs. Belfield.

"Sure, child," cried ſhe, to her daughter, "you might have let me know before now who was here, when you knew ſo well how much I wiſhed an opportunity to ſee the young lady myſelf: but here you come down upon pretence to ſee your brother, and then ſtay away all the morning, doing nobody knows what."

Then, turning to Cecilia, "Ma'am," ſhe continued, "I have been in the greateſt concern in the world for the little accident that happened when I ſaw you before; for to be ſure I thought, and indeed nobody will perſuade me to the contrary, that it was rather an odd thing for ſuch a young lady as you to come ſo often after Henny, without ſo much as thinking of any other reaſon; eſpecially when, to be ſure, there's no more compariſon between her and my ſon, than between any thing in the world; however, if it is ſo, it is ſo, and I mean to ſay no more about it; and to be ſure he's as contented to think ſo as if he was as mere an inſignificant animal as could be."

"This matter, madam," ſaid Cecilia, "has ſo long been ſettled, that I am ſorry you ſhould trouble yourſelf to think of it again."

"O, ma'am, I only mention it by the way of making the proper apology, for as to taking any other notice of it, I have quite left it off; though to be ſure what I think I think; but as to my ſon, he has ſo got the upper hand of me, that it all goes for nothing, and I might juſt as well ſing to him. Not that I mean to find fault with him neither; ſo pray, ma'am, don't let what I ſay be to his prejudice, for I believe all the time there's nobody like him, neither at this end of the town nor the other; for as to the other, he has more the look of a lord, by half, than of a ſhopman, and the reaſon's plain, for that's the ſort of company he's always kept, as I dare ſay a lady ſuch as you muſt have ſeen long ago. But for all that, there's ſome little matters that we mothers fancy we can ſee into as well as our children; however, if they don't think ſo, why it anſwers no purpoſe to diſpute; for as to a better ſon, to be ſure there never was one, and that, as I always ſay, is the beſt ſign I know for making a good huſband."

During this diſcourſe, Henrietta was in the utmoſt confuſion, dreading leſt the groſſneſs of her mother ſhould again ſend off Cecilia in anger: but Cecilia, who perceived her uneaſineſs, and who was more charmed with her character than ever, from the ſimplicity of her ſincerity, determined to ſave her that pain, quietly hearing her harangue, and then quietly departing: though ſhe was much provoked to find from the complaining hints every inſtant thrown out, that Mrs. Belfield was ſtill internally convinced her ſon's obſtinate baſhfulneſs was the only obſtacle to his chuſing whom he pleaſed: and that though ſhe no longer dared ſpeak her opinion with openneſs, ſhe was fully perſuaded Cecilia was at his ſervice.

"And for that reaſon," continued Mrs. Belfield, "to be ſure any lady that knew her own true advantage, could do nothing better than to take the recommendation of a mother, who muſt naturally know more of her own children's diſpoſition than can be expected from a ſtranger: and as to ſuch a ſon as mine, perhaps there a'n't two ſuch in the world, for he's had a gentleman's education, and turn him which way he will, he'll never ſee a handſomer perſon than his own; though, poor dear love, he was always of the thinneſt. But the misfortunes he's had to ſtruggle with would make nobody fatter."

Here ſhe was interrupted, and Cecilia not a little ſurpriſed, by the entrance of Mr. Hobſon, and Mr. Simkins.

"Ladies," cried Mr. Hobſon, whom ſhe ſoon found was Mrs. Belfield's landlord, "I would not go up ſtairs without juſt ſtopping to let you know a little how the world goes."

Then perceiving and recollecting Cecilia, he exclaimed, "I am proud to ſee you again, ma'am,—Miſs I believe I ſhould ſay, for I take it you are too young a lady to be entered into matrimony yet."

"Matrimony?" cried Mr. Simkins, "no, to be ſure, Mr. Hobſon, how can you be ſo out of the way? the young lady looks more like a Miſs from a boarding-ſchool, if I might take the liberty for to ſay ſo."

"Ay, more's the pity," cried Mrs. Belfield, "for as to young ladies waiting and waiting, I don't ſee the great good of it; eſpecially if a proper match offers: for as to a good huſband, I think no lady ſhould be above accepting him, if he's modeſt and well-behaved, and has been brought up with a genteel education."

"Why as to that, ma'am," ſaid Mr. Simkins, "its another-gueſs matter, for as to the lady's having a proper ſpouſe, if I may be ſo free, I think as it's no bad thing."

Cecilia now, taking Henrietta's hand, was wiſhing her good morning; but hearing Mr. Hobſon ſay he was juſt come from Portman-Square, her curioſity was excited, and ſhe ſtayed a little longer.

"Sad work, ma'am," ſaid he; "who'd have thought Mr. Harrel aſked us all to ſupper for the mere purpoſe of ſuch a thing as that! juſt to ſerve for a blind, as one may ſay. But when a man's conſcience is foul, what I ſay is, it's ten to one but he makes away with himſelf. Let every man keep clear of the world, that's my notion, and then he will be in no ſuch hurry to get out of it."

"Why indeed, ma'am," ſaid Mr. Simkins, advancing with many bows to Cecilia, "humbly craving pardon for the liberty, I can't pretend for to ſay I think Mr. Harrel did quite the honourable thing by us; for as to his making us drink all that champaigne, and the like, it was a ſheer take in; ſo that if I was to ſpeak my mind, I can't ſay as I eſteem it much of a favour."

"Well," ſaid Mrs. Belfield, "nothing's to me ſo ſurpriſing as a perſon's being his own executioner; for as to me, if I was to die for it fifty times, I don't think I could do it."

"So here," reſumed Mr. Hobſon, "we're all defrauded of our dues! nobody's able to get his own, let him have worked for it ever ſo hard. Sad doings in the Square, Miſs! all at ſixes and ſevens; for my part I came off from Vauxhall as ſoon as the thing had happened, hoping to get the ſtart of the others, or elſe I ſhould have been proud to wait upon you, ladies, with the particulars: but a man of buſineſs never ſtands upon ceremony, for when money's at ſtake, that's out of the queſtion. However, I was too late, for the houſe was ſeized before ever I could get nigh it."

"I hope, ma'am, if I may be ſo free," ſaid Mr. Simkins, again profoundly bowing, "that you and the other lady did not take it much amiſs my not coming back to you, for it was not out of no diſreſpect, but only I got ſo ſqueezed in by the ladies and gentlemen that was a looking on, that I could not make my way out, do what I could. But by what I ſee, I muſt needs ſay if one's in never ſuch genteel company, people are always rather of the rudeſt when one's in a crowd, for if one begs and prays never ſo, there's no making 'em conformable."

"Pray," ſaid Cecilia, "is it likely any thing will remain for Mrs. Harrel?"

"Remain, ma'am?" repeated Mr. Hobſon, "yes, a matter of a hundred bills without a receipt to 'em! To be ſure, ma'am, I don't want to affront you, that was his intimate acquaintance, more eſpecially as you've done nothing diſreſpectful by me, which is more than I can ſay for Mrs. Harrel, who ſeemed downright aſhamed of me, and of

r. Simkins too, though, all things conſi- ered, 'twould have been as well for her not o have been quite ſo high. But of that in ts proper ſeaſon!"

"Fie, Mr. Hobſon, fie," cried the ſupple Mr. Simkins, "how can you be ſo hard? for my ſhare, I muſt needs own I think the poor lady's to be pitied; for it muſt have been but a molloncholy ſight to her, to ſee her ſpouſe cut off ſo in the flower of his youth, as one may ſay: and you ought to ſcorn to take exceptions at a lady's proudneſs when ſhe's in ſo much trouble. To be ſure, I can't ſay myſelf as ſhe was over complaiſant to make us welcome; but I hope I am above being ſo unpitiful as for to owe her a grudge for it now ſhe's ſo down in the mouth."

"Let every body be civil!" cried Mr. Hobſon, "that's my notion; and then I ſhall be as much above being unpitiful as any body elſe."

"Mrs. Harrel," ſaid Cecilia, "was then too unhappy, and is now, ſurely, too unfortunate, to make it poſſible any reſentment ſhould be harboured againſt her."

"You ſpeak, ma'am, like a lady of ſenſe," returned Mr. Hobſon, "and, indeed, that's the character I hear of you; but for all that, ma'am, every body's willing to ſtand up for their own friends; for which reaſon, ma'am, to be ſure you'll be making the beſt of it, both for the relict, and the late gentleman himſelf; but, ma'am, if I was to make bold to ſpeak my mind in a fair manner, what I ſhould ſay would be this: a man here to go ſhooting himſelf with all his debts unpaid, is a mere piece of ſcandal, ma'am! I beg pardon, but what I ſay is, the truth's the truth, and I can't call it by no other nomination."

Cecilia now, finding ſhe had not any chance of pacifying him, rang for her ſervant and chair.

Mr. Simkins then, affecting to lower his voice, ſaid reproachfully to his friend, "Indeed, Mr. Hobſon, to ſpeak ingenuſly, I muſt needs ſay I don't think it over and above pelite in you to be ſo hard upon the young lady's acquaintance that was, now he's defunct. To be ſure I can't pretend for to deny but he behaved rather comical; for not paying of nobody, nor ſo much as making one a little compliment, or the like, though he made no bones of taking all one's goods, and always chuſed to have the prime of every thing, why it's what I can't pretend to ſtand up for. But that's neither here nor there, for if he had behaved as bad again, poor Miſs could not tell how to help it; and I dares to ſay ſhe had no more hand in it than nobody at all."

"No to be ſure," cried Mrs. Belfield, "what ſhould ſhe have to do with it? do you ſuppoſe a young lady of her fortune would want to take advantage of a perſon in trade? I am ſure it would be both a ſhame and a ſin if ſhe did, for if ſhe has not money enough, I wonder who has. And for my part, I think when a young lady has ſuch a fine fortune as that, the only thing ſhe has to do, is to be thinking of making a good uſe of it, by dividing it, as one may ſay, with a good huſband. For as to keeping it all for herſelf, I dare ſay ſhe's a lady of too much generoſity; and as to only marrying ſomebody that's got as much of his own, why it is not half ſo much a favour: and if the young lady would take my advice, ſhe'd marry for love, for as to lucre, ſhe's enough in all conſcience."

"As to all that," ſaid Mr. Hobſon, "it makes no alteration in my argument; I am ſpeaking to the purpoſe, and not for the matter of complaiſance: and therefore I'm bold to ſay Mr. Harrel's action had nothing of the gentleman in it. A man has a right to his own life, you'll tell me; but what of that? that's no argument at all, for it does not give him a bit the more right to my property; and a man's running in debt, and ſpending other people's ſubſtances, for no reaſon in the world but juſt becauſe he can blow out his own brains when he's done,—though it's a thing neither lawful nor religious to do,—why it's acting quite out of character, and a great hardſhip to trade into the bargain."

"I heartily wiſh it had been otherwiſe," ſaid Cecilia, "but I ſtill hope, if any thing can be done for Mrs. Harrel, you will not object to ſuch a propoſal."

"Ma'am, as I ſaid before," returned Mr. Hobſon, "I ſee you're a lady of ſenſe, and for that I honour you; but as to any thing being done, it's what I call a diſtinct thing. What's mine is mine, and what's another man's is his; that's my way of arguing; but then if he takes what's mine, where's the law to hinder my taking what's his? This is what I call talking to the purpoſe. Now as to a man's cutting his throat, or the like of that, for blowing out his own brains may be called the ſelf-ſame thing, what are his creditors the better for that? nothing at all, but ſo much the worſe: it's a falſe notion to reſpect it, for there's no reſpect in it; it's contrary to law, and a prejudice againſt religion."

"I agree entirely in your opinion," ſaid Cecilia, "but ſtill Mrs. Harrel——" "I know your argument, ma'am," interrupted Mr. Hobſon; "Mrs. Harrel i'n't the worſe for her huſband's being ſhot through the head, becauſe ſhe was no acceſſory to the ſame, and for that reaſon, it's a hardſhip ſhe ſhould loſe all her ſubſtance; this, ma'am, is what I ſay, ſpeaking to your ſide of the argument. But now, ma'am, pleaſe to take notice what I argue upon the reply; what have we creditors to do with a man's family? Suppoſe I am a cabinet-maker? When I ſend in my chairs, do I aſk who is to ſit upon them? No; it's all one to me whether it's the gentleman's progeny or his friends; I muſt be paid for the chairs the ſame, uſe them who may. That's the law, ma'am, and no man need be aſhamed to abide by it."

The truth of this ſpeech palliating its ſententious abſurdity, made Cecilia give up her faint attempt to ſoften him; and her chair being ready, ſhe aroſe to take leave.

"Lack-a day, ma'am," cried Mrs. Belfield, "I hope you won't go yet, for I expect my ſon home ſoon, and I've a heap of things to talk to you about beſides, only Mr. Hobſon having ſo much to ſay ſtopt my mouth. But I ſhould take it as a great favour, ma'am, if you would come ſome afternoon and drink a diſh of tea with me, for then we ſhould have time to ſay all our ſay. And I'm ſure, ma'am, if you would only let one of your footmen juſt take a run to let me know when you'd come, my ſon would be very proud to give you the meeting; and the ſervants can't have much elſe to do at your houſe, for where there's ſuch a heap of 'em, they commonly think of nothing all day long but ſtanding and gaping at one another."

"I am going out of town to-morrow," ſaid Cecilia, coldly, "and therefore cannot have the pleaſure of calling upon Miſs Belfield again."

She then ſlightly courtſied, and left the room.

The gentle Henrietta, her eyes ſwimming in tears, followed her to her chair; but ſhe followed her not alone, Mrs. Belfield alſo attended, repining very loudly at the unlucky abſence of her ſon: and the cringing Mr. Simkins, creeping after her and bowing, ſaid in a low voice, "I humbly crave pardon, ma'am, for the liberty, but I hope you won't think as I have any ſhare in Mr. Hobſon's behaving ſo rude, for I muſt needs ſay, I don't think it over genteel in no ſhape." And Mr. Hobſon himſelf, bent upon having one more ſentence heard, called out, even after ſhe was ſeated in her chair, "All I ſay ma'am, is this; let every man be honeſt, that's what I argue, and that's my notion of things."

Cecilia ſtill reached home before Mrs. Delvile; but moſt uneaſy were her ſenſations and moſt unquiet was her heart: the letter ſhe had ſeen in the hands of Henrietta ſeemed to corroborate all her former ſuſpicions, ſince if it came not from one infinitely dear to her ſhe would not have ſhewn ſuch fondneſs for it, and if that one was not dear to her in ſecret, ſhe would not have concealed it.

Where then was the hope that any but Delvile could have written it? *in ſecret* ſhe could not cheriſh *two*, and that Delvile was cheriſhed moſt fondly, the artleſſneſs of her character unfitted her for diſguiſing.

And why ſhould he write to her? what was his pretence? That he loved her ſhe could now leſs than ever believe, ſince his late conduct to herſelf, though perplexing and inconſiſtent, evinced at leaſt a partiality incompatible with a paſſion for another. What then could ſhe infer, but that he had ſeduced her affections, and ruined her peace, for the idle and cruel gratification of temporary vanity?

"And if ſuch," cried ſhe, "is the depravity of this accompliſhed hypocrite; if ſuch is the littleneſs of ſoul that a manner ſo noble diſguiſes, ſhall he next, urged, perhaps, rather by prudence than preference, make *me* the object of his purſuit, and the food of his vain-glory? And ſhall *I*, warned and inſtructed as I am, be as eaſy a prey, and as wretched a dupe? No, I will be better ſatisfied with his conduct, before I venture to truſt him; and ſince I am richer than Henrietta, and leſs likely to be deſerted, when won, I will be more on my guard to know why I am addreſſed, and vindicate the rights of innocence, if I find ſhe has been thus deluded, by forgetting his talents in his treachery, and renouncing him for ever!"

Such were the reflections and ſurmiſes that dampt all the long-ſought pleaſure of her change of reſidence, and made her habitation in St. James's-Square no happier than it had been at Mr. Harrel's!

She dined again with only Mr. and Mrs. Delvile, and did not ſee their ſon all day; which

which, in her preſent uncertainty what to think of him, was an abſence ſhe ſcarcely regretted.

When the ſervants retired, Mr. Delvile told her that he had that morning received two viſits upon her account, both from admirers, who each pretended to having had leave to wait upon her from Mr. Harrel.

He then named Sir Robert Floyer and Mr. Marriot.

"I believe, indeed," ſaid Cecilia, "that neither of them were treated perfectly well; to me, however, their own behaviour has by no means been ſtrictly honourable. I have always, when referred to, been very explicit; and what other methods they were pleaſed to take, I cannot wonder ſhould fail."

"I told them," ſaid Mr. Delvile, "that ſince you were now under my roof, I could not refuſe to receive their propoſals, eſpecially as there would be no impropriety in your alliance with either of them; but I told them, at the ſame time, that I could by no means think of preſſing their ſuit, as that was an office which, however well it might do for Mr. Harrel, would be totally improper and unbecoming for me."

"Certainly;" ſaid Cecilia, "and permit me, Sir, to entreat that, ſhould they again apply to you, they may be wholly diſcouraged from repeating their viſits, and aſſured that far from having trifled with them hitherto,

therto, the reſolutions I have declared will never be varied."

"I am happy," ſaid Mrs. Delvile, "to ſee ſo much ſpirit and diſcernment where arts of all ſorts will be practiſed to enſnare and delude. Fortune and independance were never ſo ſecurely lodged as in Miſs Beverley, and I doubt not but her choice, whenever it is decided, will reflect as much honour upon her heart, as her difficulty in making it does upon her underſtanding."

Mr. Delvile then enquired whether ſhe had fixed upon any perſon to chuſe as a guardian in the place of Mr. Harrel. No, ſhe ſaid, nor ſhould ſhe, unleſs it were abſolutely neceſſary.

"I believe, indeed," ſaid Mrs. Delvile, "your affairs will not much miſs him! Since I have heard of the exceſs of his extravagance, I have extremely rejoiced in the uncommon prudence and ſagacity of his fair ward, who, in ſuch dangerous hands, with leſs penetration and ſound ſenſe, might have been drawn into a thouſand difficulties, and perhaps defrauded of half her fortune."

Cecilia received but little joy from this moſt unſeaſonable compliment, which, with many of the ſame ſort that were frequently, though accidentally made, intimidated her from the confeſſion ſhe had planned: and finding nothing but cenſure was likely to follow the diſcovery, ſhe at length determined to give it up wholly, unleſs any connection ſhould take place which might render neceſſary its avowal. Yet ſomething ſhe could not but murmur, that an action ſo detrimental to her own intereſt, and which, at the time, appeared indiſpenſable to her benevolence, ſhould now be conſidered as a mark of ſuch folly and imprudence that ſhe did not dare own it.

CHAP. IX.

A Railing.

THE next morning the family purpoſed ſetting off as ſoon as breakfaſt was over; young Delvile, however, waited not ſo long; the fineneſs of the weather tempted him, he ſaid, to travel on horſeback, and therefore he had riſen very early, and was already gone. Cecilia could not but wonder, yet did not repine.

Juſt as breakfaſt was over, and Mr. and Mrs. Delvile and Cecilia were preparing to depart, to their no little ſurpriſe, the door was opened, and, out of breath with haſte and with heat, in ſtumpt Mr. Briggs! "So," cried he to Cecilia, "what's all this? hay?—where are going?—a coach at the door! horſes to every wheel! ſervants fine as lords! what's in the wind now? think to chouſe me out of my belongings?"

"I thought, Sir," ſaid Cecilia, who inſtantly underſtood him, though Mr. and Mrs. Delvile ſtared at him in utter aſtoniſhment, "I had explained before I left you that I ſhould not return."

"Did n't, did n't!" anſwered he angrily; "waited for you three days, dreſſed a breaſt o'mutton o'purpoſe; got in a lobſter, and two crabs; all ſpoilt by keeping; ſtink already; weather quite muggy, forced to ſouſe 'em in vinegar; one expence brings on another; never begin the like agen."

"I am very ſorry, indeed," ſaid Cecilia, much diſconcerted, "if there has been any miſtake through my neglect; but I had hoped I was underſtood, and I have been ſo much occupied—"

"Ay, ay," interrupted he, "fine work! rare doings! a merry Vauxhalling, with piſtols at all your noddles! thought as much! thought he'd tip the perch; ſaw he was n't ſtanch; knew he'd go by his company,—a ſet of jackanapes! all blacklegs! nobody warm among 'em: fellows with a month's good living upon their backs, and not ſixpence for the hangman in their pockets!"

Mrs. Delvile now, with a look of arch congratulation at Cecilia as the object of this agreeable viſit, finding it not likely to be immediately concluded, returned to her chair: but Mr. Delvile, leaning ſternly upon his cane, moved not from the ſpot where he ſtood at his entrance, but ſurveyed him from head to foot, with the moſt aſtoniſhing contempt at his undaunted vulgarity.

“Well I'd all your caſh myſelf; ſeized that elſe!—run out the conſtable for you; next, and made you blow your brains out for company. Mind what I ſay, never give your mind to a gold laced hat! many a-one wears it don't know five farthings from two-pence. A good man always wears a bob wig; make that your rule. Ever ſee Maſter Harrel wear ſuch a thing? No, I'll warrant! Better if he had kept his head on his own ſhoulders. And now, pray, how does he cut up? what has he left behind him? a *twey*-caſe, I ſuppoſe, and a bit of a hat won't go on a man's head!”

Cecilia, perceiving, with great confuſion, that Mr. Delvile, though evidently provoked by this intruſion, would not deign to ſpeak, that Mr. Briggs might be regarded as belonging wholly to herſelf, haſtily ſaid, “I will not, Sir, as your time is precious, detain you here, but, as ſoon as it is in my power, I will wait upon you in the city.”

Mr. Briggs, however, without liſtening

to her, thought proper to continue his harangue.

"Invited me once to his houſe; ſent me a card, half of it printed like a book! t'other half a ſcrawl could not read; pretended to give a ſupper; all a mere bam; went without my dinner, and got nothing to eat; all glaſs and ſhew; victuals painted all manner o'colours; lighted up like a paſtry-cook on twelfth-day; wanted ſomething ſolid, and got a great lump of ſweetmeat; found it as cold as a ſtone, all froze in my mouth like ice; made me jump again, and brought the tears in my eyes; forced to ſpit it out; believe it was nothing but a ſnow-ball, juſt ſet up for ſhew, and covered over with a little ſugar. Pretty way to ſpend money! Stuffing, and piping, and hopping! never could reſt till every farthing was gone; nothing left but his own fool's pate, and even that he could not hold together."

"At preſent, Sir," ſaid Cecilia, "we are all going out of town; the carriage is waiting at the door, and therefore——"

"No ſuch thing," cried he; "Sha'n't go; come for you myſelf; take you to my own houſe. Got every thing ready, been to the broker's, bought a nice blanket, hardly a brack in it. Pick up a table ſoon; one in my eye."

"I am ſorry you have ſo totally miſtaken me, Sir; for I am now going into the country with Mr. and Mrs. Delvile.”

“Won't conſent, won't conſent! what will you go there for? hear of nothing but dead dukes; as well viſit an old tomb.”

Here Mr. Delvile, who felt himſelf inſulted in a manner he could leaſt ſupport, after looking at him very diſdainfully, turned to Cecilia, and ſaid, “Miſs Beverley, if this perſon wiſhes for a longer conference with you, I am ſorry you did not appoint a more ſeaſonable hour for your interview.”

“Ay, ay,” cried the impenetrable Mr. Briggs; “want to hurry her off! ſee that! But 'twon't do; a'n't to be nicked; chuſe to come in for my thirds; won't be gulled, ſhan't have more than your ſhare.”

“Sir!” cried Mr. Delvile, with a look meant to be nothing leſs than petrific.

“What!” cried he, with an arch leer; “all above it, hay? warrant your Spaniſh Don never thinks of ſuch a thing! don't believe 'em, my duck! great cry and little wool; no more of the ready than other folks; mere puff and go one.”

“This is language, Sir,” ſaid Mr. Delvile, “ſo utterly incomprehenſible, that I preſume you do not even intend it ſhould be underſtood: otherwiſe, I ſhould very little ſcruple to inform you, that no man of the name of Delvile brooks the ſmalleſt inſinuation of diſhonour.”

"Don't he?" returned Mr. Briggs, with a grin; "why how will he help it? will the old grandees jump up out of their graves to ſrighten us?"

"What old grandees, Sir? to whom are you pleaſed to allude?"

"Why all them old grandfathers and aunts you brag of; a ſet of poor ſouls you won't let reſt in their coffins; mere clay and dirt! fine things to be proud of! a parcel of old mouldy rubbiſh quite departed this life! raking up bones and duſt, nobody knows for what! ought to be aſhamed; who cares for dead carcaſes? nothing but carrion. My little Tom's worth forty of 'em."

"I can ſo ill make out, Miſs Beverley," ſaid the aſtoniſhed Mr. Delvile, "what this perſon is pleaſed to dive at, that I cannot pretend to enter into any ſort of converſation with him; you will therefore be ſo good as to let me know when he has finiſhed his diſcourſe, and you are at leiſure to ſet off."

And then, with a very ſtately air, he was quitting the room; but was ſoon ſtopt, upon Mr. Briggs' calling out, "Ay, ay, Don Duke, poke in the old charnel houſes by yourſelf, none of your defunct for me! did n't care if they were all hung in a ſtring. Who's the better for 'em?"

"Pray, Sir," cried Mr. Delvile, turning round, "to whom were you pleaſed to addreſs that ſpeech?"

"To

"To one Don Puffendorff," replied Mr. Briggs; "know ever ſuch a perſon, hay?"

"Don who? Sir!" ſaid Mr. Delvile, ſtalking nearer to him, "I muſt trouble you to ſay that name over again."

"Suppoſe don't chuſe it? how then?"

"I am to blame," ſaid Mr. Delvile, ſcornfully waving his hand with a repulſive motion, "to ſuffer myſelf to be irritated ſo unworthily; and I am ſorry, in my own houſe, to be compelled to hint that the ſooner I have it to myſelf, the better I ſhall be contented with it."

"Ay, ay, want to get me off; want to have her to yourſelf! won't be ſo ſoon chouſed; who's the better man? hay? which do you think is warmeſt? and all got by myſelf; obliged to never a grandee for a penny; what do you ſay to that? will you caſt an account with me?"

"Very extraordinary this!" cried Mr. Delvile; "the moſt extraordinary circumſtance of the kind I ever met with! a perſon to enter my houſe in order to talk in this incomprehenſible manner! a perſon, too, I hardly know by ſight!"

"Never mind, old Don," cried Briggs, with a facetious nod, "know me better another time!"

"Old who, Sir!—what!"

"Come to a fair reckoning," continued Mr. Briggs; "ſuppoſe you were in my caſe, and had never a farthing but of your own getting; where would you be then? What would become of your fine coach and horſes? you might ſtump your feet off before you'd ever get into one. Where would be all this ſmart crockery work for your breakfaſt? you might pop your head under a pump, or drink out of your own paw. What would you do for that fine jemmy tye? Where would you get a gold head to your ſtick? You might dig long enough in them cold vaults, before any of your old grandfathers would pop out to give you one."

Mr. Delvile, feeling more enraged than he thought ſuitable to his dignity, reſtrained himſelf from making any farther anſwer, but going up to the bell, rang it with great violence.

"And as to ringing a bell," continued Mr. Briggs, "you'd never know what it was in your life; unleſs could make intereſt to be a duſt-man."

"A duſt-man!"—repeated Mr. Delvile, unable to command his ſilence longer, "I proteſt—" and biting his lips, he ſtopt ſhort.

"Ay, love it, don't you? ſuits your taſte; why not one duſt as well as another? Duſt in a cart good as duſt of a charnel-houſe; don't ſmell half ſo bad."

A ſervant now entering, Mr. Delvile called out, "Is every thing ready?"

"Yes, Sir."

He then begged Mrs. Delvile to go into the coach, and telling Cecilia to follow when at leiſure, left the room.

"I will come immediately, Sir," ſaid Cecilia; "Mr. Briggs, I am ſorry to leave you, and much concerned you have had this trouble; but I can detain Mr. Delvile no longer."

And then away ſhe ran, notwithſtanding he repeatedly charged her to ſtay. He followed them, however, to the coach, with bitter revilings that every body was to make more of his ward than himſelf, and with the moſt virulent complaints of his loſſes from the blanket, the breaſt of mutton, the crabs, and the lobſter!

Nothing, however, more was ſaid to him; Cecilia, as if ſhe had not heard him, only bowed her head, and the coach driving off, they ſoon loſt ſight of him.

This incident by no means rendered the journey pleaſant, or Mr. Delvile gracious: his own dignity, that conſtant object of his thoughts and his cares, had received a wound from this attack which he had not the ſenſe to deſpiſe; and the vulgarity and impudence of Mr. Briggs, which ought to have made his familiarity and boldneſs equally contemptible and ridiculous, ſerved only, with a man whoſe pride out-run his underſtanding, to render them doubly mortifying and ſtinging. He could talk, therefore, of nothing the whole way that they went, but the extreme impropriety of which the Dean of —— had been guilty, in expoſing him to ſcenes and ſituations ſo much beneath his rank, by leaguing him with a *perſon* ſo coarſe and diſgraceful.

They ſlept one night upon the road, and arrived the next day at Delvile Caſtle.

BOOK VI.

CHAPTER I.

AN ANTIQUE MANSION.

DELVILE Caſtle was ſituated in a large and woody park, and ſurrounded by a moat. A draw-bridge which fronted the entrance was every night, by order of Mr. Delvile, with the ſame care as if ſtill neceſſary for the preſervation of the family, regularly drawn up. Some fortifications ſtill remained entire, and veſtiges were every where to be traced of more; no taſte was ſhewn in the diſpoſition of the grounds, no openings were contrived through the wood for diſtant views or beautiful objects: the manſion-houſe was ancient, large, and magnificent, but conſtructed with as little attention to convenience and comfort, as to airineſs and elegance; it was dark, heavy, and monaſtic, equally in want of repair and of improvement. The grandeur of its former inhabitants was every where viſible, but the decay into which it was falling rendered ſuch remains mere objects for meditation and melancholy; while the evident ſtruggle to ſupport ſome appearance of its ancient dignity, made the dwelling and all in its vicinity wear an aſpect of conſtraint and auſterity. Feſtivity, joy, and pleaſure, ſeemed foreign to the purpoſes of its conſtruction; ſilence, ſolemnity, and contemplation were adapted to it only.

Mrs. Delvile, however, took all poſſible care to make the apartments and ſituation of Cecilia commodious and pleaſant, and to baniſh by her kindneſs and animation the gloom and formality which her manſion inſpired. Nor were her efforts ungratefully received; Cecilia, charmed by every mark of attention from a woman ſhe ſo highly admired, returned her ſolicitude by encreaſing affection, and repaid all her care by the revival of her ſpirits. She was happy, indeed, to have quitted the diſorderly houſe of Mr. Harrel, where terror ſo continually awakened, was only to be lulled by the groſſeſt impoſition; and though her mind, depreſſed by what was paſſed, and in ſuſpence with what was to come, was by no means in a ſtate for uninterrupted enjoyment, yet to find herſelf placed, at laſt, without effort or impropriety, in the very manſion ſhe had ſo long conſidered as her road to happineſs, rendered her, notwithſtanding her remaining ſources of inquietude, more contented than ſhe had yet felt herſelf ſince her departure from Suffolk.

Even the imperious Mr. Delvile was more

ſupportable here than in London? ſecure in his own caſtle, he looked around him with a pride of power and of poſſeſſion which ſoftened while it ſwelled him. His ſuperiority was undiſputed, his will was without controul. He was not, as in the great capital of the kingdom, ſurrounded by competitors; no rivalry diſturbed his peace, no equality mortified his greatneſs; all he ſaw were either vaſſals of his power, or gueſts bending to his pleaſure; he abated therefore, conſiderably, the ſtern gloom of his haughtineſs, and ſoothed his proud mind by the courteſy of condeſcenſion.

Little, however, was the opportunity Cecilia found, for evincing that ſpirit and forbearance ſhe had planned in relation to Delvile; he breakfaſted by himſelf every morning, rode or walked out alone till driven home by the heat of the day, and ſpent the reſt of his time till dinner in his own ſtudy. When he then appeared, his converſation was always general, and his attention not more engaged by Cecilia than by his mother. Left by them with his father, he commonly continued with him till tea-time, and then rode or ſtrolled out to ſome neighbouring family, and it was always uncertain whether he was again ſeen before dinner the next day.

By this conduct, reſerve on her part was rendered totally unneceſſary; ſhe could give no diſcouragement where ſhe met with no aſſiduity; ſhe had no occaſion to fly where ſhe was never purſued.

Strange, however, ſhe thought ſuch behaviour, and utterly impoſſible to be the effect of accident; his deſire to avoid her ſeemed ſcrupulous and pointed, and however to the world it might wear the appearance of chance, to her watchful anxiety a thouſand circumſtances marked it for deſign. She found that his friends at home had never ſeen ſo little of him; complaints were continually made of his frequent abſences, and much ſurpriſe was expreſſed at his new manner of life, and what might be the occupations which ſo ſtrangely engroſſed his time.

Had her heart not interfered in this matter, ſhe might now have been perfectly at reſt, ſince ſhe was ſpared the renunciation ſhe had projected, and ſince, without either mental exertion or perſonal trouble, the affair ſeemed totally dropt, and Delvile, far from manifeſting any deſign of conqueſt, ſhunned all occaſions of gallantry, and ſedulouſly avoided even common converſation with her. If he ſaw her preparing to walk out in an evening, he was certain to ſtay at home; if his mother was with her, and invited him to join them, he was ſure to be ready with ſome other engagement; and if by accident he met her in the park, he merely ſtopt to ſpeak of the weather, bowed, and hurried on.

How to reconcile a coldneſs ſo extraordinary with a fervour ſo animated as that which he had lately ſhewn, was indeed not eaſy; ſometimes ſhe fancied he had entangled not only the poor Henrietta but himſelf, at other times ſhe believed him merely capricious; but that he ſtudied to avoid her ſhe was convinced invariably, and ſuch a conviction was alone ſufficient to determine her upon forwarding his purpoſe. And, when her firſt ſurpriſe was over, and firſt chagrin abated, her own pride came to her aid, and ſhe reſolved to uſe every method in her power to conquer a partiality ſo ungratefully beſtowed. She rejoiced that in no inſtance ſhe had ever betrayed it, and ſhe ſaw that his own behaviour prevented all ſuſpicion of it in the family. Yet, in the midſt of her mortification and diſpleaſure, ſhe found ſome conſolation in ſeeing that thoſe mercenary views of which ſhe had once been led to accuſe him, were furtheſt from his thoughts, and that whatever was the ſtate of his mind, ſhe had no artifice to apprehend, nor deſign to guard againſt. All therefore that remained was to imitate his example, be civil and formal, ſhun all interviews that were not public, and decline all diſcourſe but what good breeding occaſionally made neceſſary.

By theſe means their meetings became more rare than ever, and of ſhorter duration, for if one by any accident was detained, the other retired; till by their mutual diligence, they ſoon only ſaw each other at dinner: and though neither of them knew the motives or the intentions of the other, the beſt concerted agreement could not more effectually have ſeparated them.

This taſk to Cecilia was at firſt extremely painful, but time and conſtancy of mind ſoon leſſened its difficulty. She amuſed herſelf with walking and reading, ſhe commiſſioned Mr. Monckton to ſend her a Piano Forte of Merlin's, ſhe was fond of fine work, and ſhe found in the converſation of Mrs. Delvile a neverfailing reſource againſt langour and ſadneſs. Leaving therefore to himſelf her myſterious ſon, ſhe wiſely reſolved to find other employment for her thoughts, than conjectures with which ſhe could not be ſatisfied, and doubts that might never be explained.

Very few families viſited at the caſtle, and fewer ſtill had their viſits returned. The arrogance of Mr. Delvile had offended all the neighbouring gentry, who could eaſily be better entertained than by receiving inſtructions of their own inferiority, which however readily they might allow, was by no means ſo pleaſant a ſubject as to recompence them for hearing no other. And if Mr. Delvile was ſhunned through hatred, his lady no leſs was avoided through fear; high ſpirited and faſtidious, ſhe was eaſily wearied and diſguſted, ſhe bore neither with frailty nor folly—thoſe two principal ingredients in human nature!

She required, to obtain her favour, the union of virtue and abilities with elegance, which, meeting but rarely, ſhe was rarely diſpoſed to be pleaſed; and diſdaining to conceal either contempt or averſion, ſhe inſpired in return nothing but dread or reſentment: making thus by a want of that lenity which is the *milk of human kindneſs*, and the bond of ſociety, enemies the moſt numerous and illiberal by thoſe very talents which, more *meekly borne*, would have rendered her not merely admired, but adored!

In proportion, however, as ſhe was thus at war with the world in general, the choſen few who were honoured with her favour, ſhe loved with a zeal all her own; her heart, liberal, open, and but too daringly ſincere, was fervent in affection, and enthuſiaſtic in admiration; the friends who were dear to her, ſhe was devoted to ſerve, ſhe magnified their virtues till ſhe thought them of an higher race of beings, ſhe inflamed her generoſity with ideas of what ſhe owed to them, till her life ſeemed too ſmall a ſacrifice to be refuſed for their ſervice.

Such was the love which already ſhe felt for Cecilia; her countenance had ſtruck, her manners had charmed her, her underſtanding was diſplayed by the quick intelligence of her eyes, and every action and every notion, ſpoke her mind the ſeat of elegance. In ſecret ſhe ſometimes regretted that ſhe was not higher born, but that regret always vaniſhed when ſhe ſaw and converſed with her.

Her own youth had been paſſed in all the ſeverity of affliction; ſhe had been married to Mr. Delvile by her relations, without any conſultation of her heart or her will. Her ſtrong mind diſdained uſeleſs complaints, yet her diſcontent, however private, was deep. Ardent in her diſpoſition, and naturally violent in her paſſions, her feelings were extremely acute, and to curb them by reaſon and principle had been the chief and hard ſtudy of her life. The effort had calmed, though it had not made her happy. To love Mr. Delvile ſhe felt was impoſſible; proud without merit, and imperious without capacity, ſhe ſaw with bitterneſs the inferiority of his faculties, and ſhe found in his temper no qualities to endear or attract: yet ſhe reſpected his birth and his family, of which her own was a branch; and whatever was her miſery from the connection, ſhe ſteadily behaved to him with the ſtricteſt propriety.

Her ſon, however, when ſhe was bleſſed with his preſence, had a power over her mind that mitigated all her ſorrows, and almoſt lulled even her wiſhes to ſleep: ſhe rather idolized than loved him, yet her fondneſs flowed not from relationſhip, but from his worth and his character, his talents and his diſpoſition. She ſaw in him, indeed, all her own virtues and excellencies, with a toleration for the imperfections of others to which ſhe was wholly a ſtranger. Whatever was great or good ſhe expected him to perform; occaſion alone ſhe thought wanting to manifeſt him the firſt of human beings.

Nor here was Mr. Delvile himſelf leſs ſanguine in his hopes; his ſon was not only the firſt object of his affection, but the chief idol of his pride, and he did not merely cheriſh but reverence him as his ſucceſſor, the only ſupport of his ancient name and family, without whoſe life and health the whole race would be extinct. He conſulted him in all his affairs, never mentioned him but with diſtinction, and expected the whole world to bow down before him.

Delvile in his behaviour to his father imitated the conduct of his mother, who oppoſed him in nothing when his pleaſure was made known, but who forbore to enquire into his opinion, except in caſes of neceſſity. Their minds, indeed, were totally diſſimilar; and Delvile well knew that if he ſubmitted to his dictations, he muſt demand ſuch reſpect as the world would refuſe with indignation, and ſcarcely ſpeak to a man whoſe genealogy was not known to him.

But though duty and gratitude were the only ties that bound him to his father, he loved his mother not merely with filial affection, but with the pureſt eſteem and higheſt reverence; he knew, too, that while without him her exiſtence would be a burthen, her tenderneſs was no effuſion of weak partiality, but founded on the ſtrongeſt aſſurances of his worth; and however to maternal indulgence its origin might be owing, the rectitude of his own conduct could alone ſave it from diminution.

Such was the houſe in which Cecilia was now ſettled, and with which ſhe lived almoſt to the excluſion of the ſight of any other; for though ſhe had now been three weeks at the caſtle, ſhe had only at church ſeen any family but the Delviles.

Nor did any thing in the courſe of that time occur to her, but the reception of a melancholy letter from Mrs. Harrel, filled with complaints of her retirement and miſery; and another from Mr. Arnott, with an account of the funeral, the difficulties he had had to encounter with the creditors, who had even ſeized the dead body, and the numerous expences in which he had been involved, by petitions he could not withſtand, from the meaner and more clamorous of thoſe whom his late brother-in-law had left unpaid. He concluded with a pathetic prayer for her happineſs, and a declaration that his own was loſt for ever, ſince now he was even deprived of her ſight. Cecilia wrote an affectionate anſwer to Mrs. Harrel, promiſing, when fully at liberty, that ſhe would herſelf fetch her to her own houſe in Suffolk; but ſhe could only ſend her compliments to Mr. Arnott, though her compaſſion urged a kinder meſſage; as ſhe feared even a ſhadow of encouragement to ſo ſerious, yet hopeleſs a paſſion.

CHAP. II.

A Rattle.

AT this time the houſe was much enlivened by a viſit from Lady Honoria Pemberton, who came to ſpend a month with Mrs. Delvile.

Cecilia had now but little leiſure, for Lady Honoria would hardly reſt a moment away from her; ſhe inſiſted upon walking with her, ſitting with her, working with her, and ſinging with her; whatever ſhe did, ſhe choſe to do alſo; wherever ſhe went, ſhe was bent upon accompanying her; and Mrs. Delvile, who wiſhed her well, though ſhe had no patience with her foibles, encouraged this intimacy from the hope it might do her ſervice.

It was not, however, that Lady Honoria had conceived any regard for Cecilia; on the contrary, had ſhe been told ſhe ſhould ſee her no more, ſhe would have heard it with the ſame compoſure as if ſhe had been told ſhe ſhould meet with her daily: ſhe had no motive for purſuing her but that ſhe had nothing elſe to do, and no fondneſs for her ſociety but what reſulted from averſon to ſolitude.

Lady Honoria had received a faſhionable education, in which her proficiency had been equal to what faſhion made requiſite; ſhe ſang a little, played the harpſichord a little, painted a little, worked a little, and danced a great deal. She had quick parts and high ſpirits, though her mind was uncultivated, and ſhe was totally void of judgment or diſcretion: ſhe was careleſs of giving offence, and indifferent to all that was thought of her; the delight of her life was to create wonder by her rattle, and whether that wonder was to her advantage or diſcredit, ſhe did not for a moment trouble herſelf to conſider.

A character of ſo much levity with ſo little heart had no great chance of raiſing eſteem or regard in Cecilia, who at almoſt any other period of her life would have been wearied of her importunate attendance; but at preſent, the unſettled ſtate of her own mind made her glad to give it any employment, and the ſprightlineſs of Lady Honoria ſerved therefore to amuſe her. Yet ſhe could not forbear being hurt by finding that the behaviour of Delvile was ſo exactly the ſame to them both, that any common obſerver would with difficulty have pronounced which he preferred.

One morning about a week after her ladyſhip's arrival at the caſtle, ſhe came running into Cecilia's room, ſaying ſhe had very good news for her.

"A charming opening!" cried Cecilia, "pray tell it me."

"Why my Lord Derford is coming!"

"O what a melancholy dearth of incident," cried Cecilia, "if this is your beſt intelligence!"

"Why it's better than nothing: better than going to ſleep over a family-party; and I vow I have ſometimes ſuch difficulty to keep awake, that I am frightened to death leſt I ſhould be taken with a ſudden nap, and affront them all. Now pray ſpeak the truth without ſqueamiſhneſs, don't you find it very terrible?"

"No, I find nothing very terrible with Mrs. Delvile."

"O, I like Mrs. Delvile, too, of all things, for I believe ſhe's the cleverest woman in the world; but then I know ſhe does not like me, ſo there's no being very fond of her. Beſides, really, if I admired her as much again, I ſhould be dreadfully tired of ſeeing nothing elſe. She never ſtirs out, you know, and has no company at home, which is an extremely tireſome plan, for it only ſerves to make us all doubly ſick of one another:

other: though you muſt know it's one great reaſon why my father likes I ſhould come; for he has ſome very old-faſhioned notions, though I take a great deal of pains to make him get the better of them. But I am always exceſſively rejoiced when the viſit has been paid, for I am obliged to come every year. I don't mean *now*, indeed, becauſe your being here makes it vaſtly more tolerable."

"You do me much honour," ſaid Cecilia, laughing.

"But really, when my Lord Derford comes, it can't poſſibly be quite ſo bad, for at leaſt there will be ſomething elſe to look at; and you muſt know my eyes tire extremely of always ſeeing the ſame objects. And we can aſk him, too, for a little news, and that will put Mrs. Delvile in a paſſion, which will help to give us a little ſpirit: though I know we ſhall not get the ſmalleſt intelligence from him, for he knows nothing in the world that's going forward. And indeed, that's no great matter, for if he did, he would not know how to tell it, he's ſo exceſſively ſilly. However, I ſhall aſk him all ſort of things, for the leſs he can anſwer, the more it will plague him; and I like to plague a fool amazingly, becauſe he can never plague one again—Though really I ought to beg your pardon, for he is one of your admirers."

"O pray make no ſtranger of me! you

have my free conſent to ſay whatever you pleaſe of him."

"I aſſure you, then, I like my old Lord Ernolf the beſt of the two, for he has a thouſand times more ſenſe than his ſon, and upon my word I don't think he is much uglier. But I wonder vaſtly you would not marry him, for all that, for you might have done exactly what you pleaſed with him, which, all together, would have been no inconvenient circumſtance."

"When I want a pupil," anſwered Cecilia, "I ſhall think that an admirable recommendation: but were I to marry, I would rather find a tutor, of the two."

"I am ſure I ſhould not," cried Lady Honoria, careleſsly, "for one has enough to do with tutors before hand, and the beſt thing I know of marrying is to get rid of them. I fancy you think ſo too, only it's a pretty ſpeech to make. Oh how my ſiſter Euphraſia would adore you!—Pray are you always as grave as you are now?"

"No,—yes,—indeed I hardly know."

"I fancy it's this diſmal place that hurts your ſpirits. I remember when I ſaw you in St. James's-Square I thought you very lively. But really theſe thick walls are enough to inſpire the vapours if one never had them before."

"I don't think they have had a very bad effect upon your ladyſhip!"

"Oh

"O yes they have; if Euphraſia was here ſhe would hardly know me. And the extreme want of taſte and entertainment in all the family is quite melancholy: for even if by chance one has the good fortune to hear any intelligence, Mrs. Delvile will hardly let it be repeated, for fear it ſhould happen to be untrue, as if that could poſſibly ſignify! I am ſure I had as lieve the things were falſe as not, for they tell as well the one way as the other, if ſhe would but have patience to hear them. But ſhe's extremely ſevere, you know, as almoſt all thoſe very clever women are; ſo that ſhe keeps a kind of reſtraint upon me whether I will or no. However, that's nothing compared to her *caro ſpoſo*, for he is utterly inſufferable; ſo ſolemn, and ſo dull! ſo ſtately and ſo tireſome! Mortimer, too, gets worſe and worſe: O 'tis a ſad tribe! I dare ſay he will ſoon grow quite as horrible as his father. Don't you think ſo?"

"Why indeed,—no,—I do'nt think there's much reſemblance," ſaid Cecilia, with ſome heſitation.

"He is the moſt altered creature," continued her ladyſhip, "I ever ſaw in my life. Once I thought him the moſt agreeable young man in the world; but if you obſerve that's all over now, and he is getting juſt as ſtupid and diſmal as the reſt of them. I wiſh you had been here laſt ſummer; I aſſure you,

you would quite have fallen in love with him."

"Should I?" ſaid Cecilia, with a conſcious ſmile.

"Yes, for he was quite delightful; all ſpirit and gaiety; but now, if it was not for you, I really think I ſhould pretend to loſe my way, and inſtead of going over that old draw-bridge, throw myſelf into the moat. I wiſh Euphraſia was here. It's juſt the right place for her. She'll fancy herſelf in a monaſtery as ſoon as ſhe comes, and nothing will make her half ſo happy, for ſhe is always wiſhing to be a nun, poor little ſimpleton."

"Is there any chance that Lady Euphraſia may come?"

"O no, ſhe can't at preſent, becauſe it would not be proper: but I mean if ever ſhe is married to Mortimer."

"Married to him!" repeated Cecilia, in the utmoſt conſternation.

"I believe, my dear," cried Lady Honoria, looking at her very archly, "you intend to be married to him yourſelf?"

"Me? no, indeed!"

"You look very guilty, though," cried ſhe, laughing; "and indeed when you came hither, every body ſaid that the whole affair was arranged."

"For ſhame, Lady Honoria!" ſaid Cecilia, again changing colour, "I am ſure this muſt be your own fancy,—invention—"

"No, I aſſure you; I heard it at ſeveral places; and every body ſaid how charmingly your fortune would build up all theſe old fortifications: but ſome people ſaid they knew Mr. Harrel had ſold you to Mr. Marriot, and that if you married Mortimer, there would be a law-ſuit that would take away half your eſtate; and others ſaid you had promiſed your hand to Sir Robert Floyer, and repented when you heard of his mortgages, and he gave it out every where that he would fight any man that pretended to you; and then again ſome ſaid that you were all the time privately married to Mr. Arnott, but did not dare own it, becauſe he was ſo afraid of fighting with Sir Robert."

"O Lady Honoria!" cried Cecilia, half laughing, "what wild inventions are theſe! and all, I hope, your own?"

"No, indeed, they were current over the whole town. But don't take any notice of what I told you about Euphraſia, for perhaps it may never happen."

"Perhaps," ſaid Cecilia, reviving by believing it all fiction, "it has never been in agitation?"

"O yes; it is negociating at this very moment, I believe, among the higher powers; only Mr. Delvile does not yet know whether Euphraſia has fortune enough for what he wants."

Ah, thought Cecilia, how do I rejoice that

my

my independent ſituation exempts me from being diſpoſed of for life, by thus being ſet up to ſale!

"They thought of me, once, for Mortimer," continued Lady Honoria, "but I'm vaſtly glad that's over, for I never ſhould have ſurvived being ſhut up in this place; it's much fitter for Euphraſia. To tell you the truth, I believe they could not make out money enough; but Euphraſia has a fortune of her own, beſides what we ſhall have together, for Grandmama left her every thing that was in her own power."

"Is Lady Euphraſia your elder ſiſter?"

"O no, poor little thing, ſhe's two years younger. Grandmama brought her up, and ſhe has ſeen nothing at all of the world, for ſhe has never been preſented yet, ſo ſhe is not *come out*, you know: but ſhe's to come out next year. However, ſhe once ſaw Mortimer, but ſhe did not like him at all."

"Not like him!" cried Cecilia, greatly ſurpriſed.

"No, ſhe thought him too gay.—Oh dear, I wiſh ſhe could ſee him now! I am ſure I hope ſhe would find him ſad enough! ſhe is the moſt formal little grave thing you ever beheld; ſhe'll preach to you ſometimes for half an hour together. Grandmama taught her nothing in the world but to ſay her prayers, ſo that almoſt every other word you ſay, ſhe thinks is quite wicked."

The converſation was now interrupted by their ſeparating to dreſs for dinner. It left Cecilia in much perplexity; ſhe knew not what wholly to credit, or wholly to diſbelieve; but her chief concern aroſe from the unfortunate change of countenance which Lady Honoria had been ſo quick in obſerving.

The next time ſhe was alone with Mrs. Delvile, "Miſs Beverley," ſhe ſaid, "has your little rattling tormentor acquainted you who is coming?"

"Lord Derford, do you mean, ma'am?"

"Yes, with his father; ſhall you diſlike to ſee him?"

"Not if, as I hope, they come merely to wait upon you and Mr. Delvile."

"Mr. Delvile and myſelf," anſwered ſhe, ſmiling, "will certainly have the honour of *receiving* them."

"Lord Ernolf," ſaid Cecilia, "can never ſuppoſe his viſit will make any change in me; I have been very explicit with him, and he ſeemed equally rational and well bred in forbearing any importunity upon the ſubject."

"It has however been much believed in town," ſaid Mrs. Delvile, "that you were ſtrangely ſhackled by Mr. Harrel, and therefore his lordſhip may probably hope that a change in your ſituation may be followed by a change in his favour."

"I ſhall be ſorry if he does," ſaid Cecilia, "for he will then find himſelf much deceived."

"You are right, very right," cried Mrs. Delvile, "to be difficult in your choice, and to take time for looking around you before you make any. I have forborn all queſtions upon this ſubject, leſt you ſhould find any reluctance in anſwering them; but I am now too deeply intereſted in your welfare to be contented in total ignorance of your deſigns: will you, then, ſuffer me to make a few enquiries?"

Cecilia gave a ready, but bluſhing aſſent.

"Tell me, then, of the many admirers who have graced your train, which there is you have diſtinguiſhed with any intention of future preference?"

"Not one, madam!"

"And, out of ſo many, is there not one that, hereafter, you mean to diſtinguiſh?"

"Ah, madam!" cried Cecilia, ſhaking her head, "many as they may ſeem, I have little reaſon to be proud of them; there is one only who, had my fortune been ſmaller, would, I believe, ever have thought of me; and there is *one* only, who, were it now diminiſhed, would ever think of me more."

"This ſincerity," cried Mrs. Delvile, "is juſt what I expected from you. There is, then, *one*?"

"I believe there is,—and the worthy Mr. Arnott is the man; I am much indeed deceived,

ceived, if his partiality for me is not truly diſintereſted, and I almoſt wiſh—"

"What, my love?"

"That I could return it more gratefully!"

"And do you not?"

"No!—I cannot! I eſteem him, I have the trueſt regard for his character, and were I now, by any fatal neceſſity, compelled to belong to any one of thoſe who have been pleaſed to addreſs me, I ſhould not heſitate a moment in ſhewing him my gratitude; but yet, for ſome time at leaſt, ſuch a proof of it would render me very miſerable."

"You may perhaps think ſo now," returned Mrs. Delvile; "but with ſentiments ſo ſtrongly in his favour, you will probably be led hereafter to pity—and accept him."

"No, indeed, madam;—I pretend not, I own, to open my whole heart to you;—I know not that you would have patience for ſo unintereſting a detail; but though there are ſome things I venture not to mention, there is nothing, believe me, in which I will deceive you."

"I *do* believe you," cried Mrs. Delvile, embracing her; "and the more readily becauſe, not merely among your avowed admirers, but among the whole race of men, I ſcarce know one to whom I ſhould think you worthily conſigned!"

Ah! thought Cecilia, that ſcarce! who may it mean to except?

"To ſhew you," ſhe continued, "that I will deſerve your confidence in future, I will refrain from diſtreſſing you by any farther queſtions at preſent: you will not, I think, act materially without conſulting me, and for your thoughts—it were tyranny, not friendſhip, to inveſtigate them more narrowly."

Cecilia's gratitude for this delicacy, would inſtantly have induced her to tell every ſecret of her ſoul, had ſhe not apprehended ſuch a confeſſion would have ſeemed ſoliciting her intereſt and aſſiſtance, in the only affair in which ſhe would have diſdained even to receive them.

She thanked her, therefore, for her kindneſs, and the converſation was dropt; ſhe much wiſhed to have known whether theſe enquiries ſprang ſimply from friendly curioſity, or whether ſhe was deſirous from any nearer motive to be ſatisfied with reſpect to her freedom or engagements. This, however, ſhe had no method of diſcovering, and was therefore compelled to wait quietly till time ſhould make it clear.

CHAP. III.

A STORM.

ONE evening about this time, which was the latter end of July, Lady Honoria and Cecilia deferred walking out till very late, and then found it ſo pleaſant, that they had ſtrolled into the Park two miles from the houſe, when they were met by young Delvile; who, however, only reminded them how far they had to return, and walked on.

"He grows quite intolerable!" cried Lady Honoria, when he was gone; "it's really a melancholy thing to ſee a young man behave ſo like an old monk. I dare ſay in another week he won't take off his hat to us; and, in about a fortnight, I ſuppoſe he'll ſhut himſelf up in one of thoſe little round towers, and ſhave his head, and live upon roots, and howl if any body comes near him. I really half wonder he does not think it too diſſipated to let Fidel run after him ſo. A thouſand to one but he ſhoots him ſome day for giving a ſudden bark when he's in one of theſe gloomy fits. Something, however, muſt certainly be the matter with him. Perhaps he is in love."

"Can nothing be the matter with him but that?" cried Cecilia.

"Nay, I don't know; but I am ſure if he is, his miſtreſs has not much occaſion to be jealous of you or me, for never, I think, were two poor damſels ſo neglected!"

The utmoſt art of malice could not have furniſhed a ſpeech more truly mortifying to Cecilia than this thoughtleſs and accidental ſally of Lady Honoria's; particularly, however, upon her guard, from the raillery ſhe had already endured, ſhe anſwered with apparent indifference, "he is meditating, perhaps, upon Lady Euphraſia."

"O no," cried Lady Honoria; "for he did not take any notice of her when he ſaw her; I am ſure if he marries her, it will only be becauſe he cannot help it."

"Poor Lady Euphraſia!"

"O no, not at all; he'll make her two or three fine ſpeeches, and then ſhe'll be perfectly contented: eſpecially if he looks as diſmally at her as he does at us! and that probably he will do the more readily for not liking to look at her at all. But ſhe's ſuch a romantic little thing, ſhe'll never ſuſpect him."

Here they were ſomewhat alarmed by a ſudden darkneſs in the air, which was preſently ſucceeded by a thunder ſtorm; they inſtantly turned back, and began running home, when a violent ſhower of rain obliged them to take ſhelter under a large tree; where in two minutes they were joined by Delvile, who came to offer his aſſiſtance in hurrying them home; and finding the thunder and lightning continue, begged them to move on, in defiance of the rain, as their preſent ſituation expoſed them to more danger than a wet hat and cloak, which might be changed in a moment.

Cecilia readily aſſented; but Lady Honoria, extremely frightened, proteſted ſhe would not ſtir till the ſtorm was over. It was in vain he repreſented her miſtake in ſuppoſing herſelf in a place of ſecurity; ſhe clung to the tree, ſcreamed at every flaſh of lightning, and all her gay ſpirits were loſt in her apprehenſions.

Delvile then earneſtly propoſed to Cecilia conducting her home by herſelf, and returning again to Lady Honoria; but ſhe thought it wrong to quit her companion, and hardly right to accept his aſſiſtance ſeparately. They waited, therefore, ſome time all together; but the ſtorm increaſing with great violence, the thunder growing louder, and the lightning becoming ſtronger, Delvile grew impatient even to anger at Lady Honoria's reſiſtance, and warmly expoſtulated upon its folly and danger. But this was no ſeaſon for leſſons in philoſophy; prejudices ſhe had never been taught to ſurmount made her think herſelf in a place of ſafety; and ſhe was now too much terrified to give argument fair play.

Finding her thus impracticable, Delvile eagerly ſaid to Cecilia, "Come then, Miſs Beverley, let us wait no longer; I will ſee you home, and then return to Lady Honoria."

"By no means," cried ſhe, "my life is not more precious than either of yours, and therefore it may run the ſame riſk."

"It is more precious," cried he with vehemence, "than the air I breathe!" and ſeizing her hand, he drew it under his arm, and, without waiting her conſent, almoſt forced her away with him, ſaying as they ran, "How could a thouſand Lady Honoria's recompence the world for the loſs of one Miſs Beverley? we may, indeed, find many thouſand ſuch as Lady Honoria, but ſuch as Miſs Beverley—where ſhall we ever find another?"

Cecilia ſurpriſed, yet gratified, could not ſpeak, for the ſpeed with which they ran almoſt took away her breath; and before they were near home, ſlackening her pace, and panting, ſhe confeſſed her ſtrength was exhauſted, and that ſhe could go ſo faſt no further.

"Let us then ſtop and reſt," cried he; "but why will you not lean upon me? ſurely this is no time for ſcruples, and for idle and unneceſſary ſcruples, Miſs Beverley can never find a time."

Cecilia then, urged equally by ſhame at his ſpeech, and by weakneſs from fatigue, leant upon his arm; but ſhe ſoon repented her condeſcenſion, for Delvile, with an emotion he ſeemed to find wholly irrepreſſible, paſſionately exclaimed, "ſweet lovely burthen! O why not thus for ever!"

The ſtrength of Cecilia was now inſtantly reſtored, and ſhe haſtily withdrew from his hold; he ſuffered her to diſengage herſelf, but ſaid in a faultering voice, "Pardon me, Cecilia!—Madam!—Miſs Beverley, I mean!——"

Cecilia, without making any anſwer, walked on by herſelf, as quick a pace as ſhe was able; and Delvile, not venturing to oppoſe her, ſilently followed.

They had gone but a few ſteps, before there came a violent ſhower of hail; and the wind, which was very high, being immediately in their faces, Cecilia was ſo pelted and incommoded, that ſhe was frequently obliged to ſtop, in defiance of her utmoſt efforts to force herſelf forward. Delvile then approaching her, propoſed that ſhe ſhould again ſtand under a tree, as the thunder and lightning for the preſent ſeemed over, and wait there till the fury of the hail was paſt; and Cecilia, though never before ſo little diſpoſed to oblige him, was ſo much diſtreſſed by the violence of the wind and hail, that ſhe was forced to comply.

Every inſtant now ſeemed an age; yet neither hail nor wind abated: mean time they were both ſilent, and both, though with different feelings, equally comfortleſs.—

Delvile, however, who took care to place himſelf on the ſide whence the wind blew hardeſt, perceived, in ſpite of his endeavours to ſave her, ſome hail-ſtones lodged upon her thin ſummer cloak: he then took off his own hat, and, though he ventured not to let it touch her, held it in ſuch a manner as to ſhelter her better.

Cecilia now could no longer be either ſilent or unmoved, but turning to him with much emotion, ſaid, "Why will you do this, Mr. Delvile?"

"What would I *not* do," anſwered he, "to obtain forgiveneſs from Miſs Beverley?"

"Well, well,—pray put on your hat."

"Do you command it?"

"No, certainly!—but I wiſh it."

"Ah!" cried he, inſtantly putting it on, "whoſe are the commands that would have half the weight with your wiſhes?"

And then, after another pauſe, he added, "do you forgive me?"

Cecilia, aſhamed of the cauſe of their diſſention, and ſoftened by the ſeriouſneſs of his manner, anſwered very readily, "yes, yes,—why will you make me remember ſuch nonſenſe?"

"All ſweetneſs," cried he warmly, and

ſnatching her hand, "is Miſs Beverley!—O that I had power—that it were not utterly impoſſible—that the cruelty of my ſituation——"

"I find," cried ſhe, greatly agitated, and forcibly drawing away her hand, "you will teach me, for another time, the folly of fearing bad weather!"

And ſhe hurried from beneath the tree; and Delvile perceiving one of the ſervants approach with an umbrella, went forward to take it from him, and directed him to haſten inſtantly to Lady Honoria.

Then returning to Cecilia, he would have held it over her head, but with an air of diſpleaſure, ſhe took it into her own hand.

"Will you not let me carry it for you?" he cried.

"No, Sir, there is not any occaſion."

They then proceeded ſilently on.

The ſtorm was now ſoon over; but it grew very dark, and as they had quitted the path while they ran, in order to get home by a ſhorter cut, the walk was ſo bad from the height of the graſs, and the unevenneſs of the ground, that Cecilia had the utmoſt difficulty to make her way; yet ſhe reſolutely refuſed any aſſiſtance from Delvile, who walked anxiouſly by her ſide, and ſeemed equally fearful upon his own account and upon hers, to truſt himſelf with being importunate.

At length they came to a place which Cecilia in vain tried to paſs; Delvile then grew more urgent to help her: firm, however, in declining all aid, ſhe preferred going a conſiderable way round to another part of the park which led to the houſe. Delvile, angry as well as mortified, propoſed to aſſiſt her no more, but followed without ſaying a word.

Cecilia, though ſhe felt not all the reſentment ſhe diſplayed, ſtill thought it neceſſary to ſupport it, as ſhe was much provoked with the perpetual inconſiſtency of his behaviour, and deemed it wholly improper to ſuffer, without diſcouragement, occaſional ſallies of tenderneſs from one who, in his general conduct, behaved with the moſt ſcrupulous reſerve.

They now arrived at the caſtle; but entering by a back way, came to a ſmall and narrow paſſage which obſtructed the entrance of the umbrella: Delvile once more, and almoſt involuntarily, offered to help her; but, letting down the ſpring, ſhe coldly ſaid ſhe had no farther uſe for it.

He then went forward to open a ſmall gate which led by another long paſſage into the hall; but hearing the ſervants advance, he held it for an inſtant in his hand, while, in a tone of voice the moſt dejected, he ſaid, "I am grieved to find you thus offended; but were it poſſible you could know half the wretchedneſs of my heart, the generoſity of your own would make you regret this ſeverity!' and then, opening the gate, he bowed, and went another way.

Cecilia was now in the midſt of ſervants; but ſo much ſhocked and aſtoniſhed by the unexpected ſpeech of Delvile, which inſtantly changed all her anger into ſorrow, that ſhe ſcarce knew what they ſaid to her, nor what ſhe replied; though they all with one voice enquired what was become of Lady Honoria, and which way they ſhould run to ſeek her.

Mrs. Delvile then came alſo, and ſhe was obliged to recollect herſelf. She immediately propoſed her going to bed, and drinking white wine whey to prevent taking cold: cold, indeed, ſhe feared not; yet ſhe agreed to the propoſal, for ſhe was confounded and diſmayed by what had paſſed, and utterly unable to hold any converſation.

Her perplexity and diſtreſs were, however, all attributed to fatigue and fright; and Mrs. Delvile, having aſſiſted in hurrying her to bed, went to perform the ſame office for Lady Honoria, who arrived at that time.

Left at length by herſelf, ſhe revolved in her mind the adventure of the evening, and the whole behaviour of Delvile ſince firſt ſhe was acquainted with him. That he loved her with tenderneſs, with fondneſs loved her, ſeemed no longer to admit of any doubt, for however diſtant and cold he appeared, when acting with circumſpection and deſign, the moment he was off his guard from ſurpriſe, terror, accident of any ſort, the moment that he was betrayed into acting from nature and inclination, he was conſtantly certain to diſcover a regard the moſt animating and flattering.

This regard, however, was not more evident than his deſire to conceal and to conquer it, he ſeemed to dread even her ſight, and to have impoſed upon himſelf the moſt rigid forbearance of all converſation or intercourſe with her.

Whence could this ariſe? what ſtrange and unfathomable cauſe could render neceſſary a conduct ſo myſterious? he knew not, indeed, that ſhe herſelf wiſhed it changed, but he could not be ignorant that his chance with almoſt any woman would at leaſt be worth trying.

Was the obſtacle which thus diſcouraged him the condition impoſed by her uncle's will of giving her own name to the man ſhe married? this ſhe herſelf thought was an unpleaſant circumſtance, but yet ſo common for an heireſs, that it could hardly out-weigh the many advantages of ſuch a connection.

Henrietta again occurred to her; the letter ſhe had ſeen in her hands was ſtill unexplained: yet her entire conviction that Henrietta was not loved by him, joined to a certainty that affection alone could ever make him think of her, leſſened upon this ſubject her ſuſpicions every moment.

Lady Euphraſia Pemberton, at laſt, reſted moſt upon her mind, and ſhe thought it probable ſome actual treaty was negociating with the Duke of Derwent.

Mrs. Delvile ſhe had every reaſon to believe was her friend, though ſhe was ſcrupulouſly delicate in avoiding either raillery or obſervation upon the ſubject of her ſon, whom ſhe rarely mentioned, and never but upon occaſions in which Cecilia could have no poſſible intereſt.

The father, therefore, notwithſtanding all Mr. Monckton had repreſented to the contrary, appeared to be the real obſtacle; his pride might readily object to her birth, which though not contemptible, was merely decent, and which, if traced beyond her grandfather, loſt all title even to that epithet.

"If this, however," ſhe cried, "is at laſt his ſituation, how much have I been to blame in cenſuring his conduct! for while to me he has appeared capricious, he has, in fact, acted wholly from neceſſity: if his father inſiſts upon his forming another connection, has he not been honourable, prudent, and juſt, in flying an object that made him think of diſobedience, and endeavouring to keep her ignorant of a partiality it is his duty to curb?"

All, therefore, that remained for her to do or to reſolve, was to guard her own ſecret with more aſſiduous care than ever, and ſince ſhe found that their union was by himſelf thought impoſſible, to keep from his knowledge that the regret was not all his own.

CHAP. IV.

A Mystery.

FOR two days, in conſequence of violent colds caught during the ſtorm, Lady Honoria Pemberton and Cecilia were confined to their rooms. Cecilia, glad by ſolitude and reflection to compoſe her ſpirits and ſettle her plan of conduct, would willingly have ſtill prolonged her retirement, but the abatement of her cold affording her no pretence, ſhe was obliged on the third day to make her appearance.

Lady Honoria, though leſs recovered, as ſhe had been more a ſufferer, was impatient of any reſtraint, and would take no denial to quitting her room at the ſame time; at dinner, therefore, all the family met as uſual.

Mr. Delvile, with his accuſtomed ſolemnity of civility, made various enquiries and congratulations upon their danger and their ſecurity, carefully in both, addreſſing himſelf firſt to Lady Honoria, and then with more ſtatelineſs, in his kindneſs, to Cecilia. His lady, who had frequently viſited them both, had nothing new to hear.

Delvile did not come in till they were all ſeated, when, haſtily ſaying he was glad to ſee both the ladies ſo well again, he inſtantly employed himſelf in carving, with the agitation of a man who feared truſting himſelf to ſit idle.

Little, however, as he ſaid, Cecilia was much ſtruck by the melancholy tone of his voice, and the moment ſhe raiſed her eyes, ſhe obſerved that his countenance was equally ſad.

"Mortimer," cried Mr. Delvile, "I am ſure you are not well; I cannot imagine why you will not have ſome advice."

"Were I to ſend for a phyſician, Sir," cried Delvile, with affected chearfulneſs, "he would find it much more difficult to imagine what advice to give me."

"Permit me, however, Mr. Mortimer," cried Lady Honoria, "to return you my humble thanks for the honour of your aſſiſtance in the thunder ſtorm! I am afraid you made yourſelf ill by attending *me*!"

"Your ladyſhip," returned Delvile, colouring very high, yet pretending to laugh; "made ſo great a coward of me, that I ran away from ſhame at my own inferiority of courage."

"Were you, then, with Lady Honoria during the ſtorm?" cried Mrs. Delvile.

"No, Madam!" cried Lady Honoria very quick; "but he was ſo good as to *leave* me during the ſtorm."

"Mortimer," ſaid Mr. Delvile, "is this poſſible?"

"O Lady Honoria was ſuch a heroine," anſwered Delvile, "that ſhe wholly diſdained receiving any aſſiſtance; her valour was ſo much more undaunted than mine, that ſhe ventured to brave the lightning under an oak tree!"

"Now, dear Mrs. Delvile," exclaimed Lady Honoria, "think what a ſimpleton he would have made of me! he wanted to perſuade me that in the open air I ſhould be leſs expoſed to danger than under the ſhelter of a thick tree!"

"Lady Honoria," replied Mrs. Delvile, with a ſarcaſtic ſmile, "the next tale of ſcandal you oblige me to hear, I will inſiſt for your puniſhment that you ſhall read one of Mr. Newbery's little books! there are twenty of them that will explain this matter to you, and ſuch reading will at leaſt employ your time as uſefully as ſuch tales!"

"Well, ma'am," ſaid Lady Honoria, "I don't know whether you are laughing at me or not, but really I concluded Mr. Mortimer

mer only choſe to amuſe himſelf in a tête à tête with Miſs Beverley."

"He was not with Miſs Beverley," cried Mrs. Delvile with quickneſs; "ſhe was alone,—I ſaw her myſelf the moment ſhe came in."

"Yes, ma'am,—but not then,—he was gone;"—ſaid Cecilia, endeavouring, but not very ſucceſsfully, to ſpeak with compoſure.

"I had the honour," cried Delvile, making, with equal ſucceſs, the ſame attempt, "to wait upon Miſs Beverley to the little gate; and I was then returning to Lady Honoria when I met her ladyſhip juſt coming in."

"Very extraordinary, Mortimer," ſaid Mr. Delvile, ſtaring, "to attend Lady Honoria the laſt!"

"Don't be angry in earneſt, Sir," cried Lady Honoria, gaily, "for I did not mean to turn tell-tale."

Here the ſubject was dropt: greatly to the joy both of Delvile and Cecilia, who mutually exerted themſelves in talking upon what next was ſtarted, in order to prevent its being recurred to again.

That fear, however, over, Delvile ſaid little more; ſadneſs hung heavily on his mind; he was abſent, diſturbed, uneaſy; yet he endeavoured no longer to avoid Cecilia; on the contrary, when ſhe aroſe to quit the room, he looked evidently diſappointed.

The ladies colds kept them at home all the evening, and Delvile, for the firſt time ſince their arrival at the caſtle, joined them at tea: nor when it was over, did he as uſual retire; he loitered, pretended to be caught by a new pamphlet, and looked as anxiouſly eager to ſpeak with Cecilia, as he had hitherto appeared to ſhun her.

With new emotion and freſh diſtreſs Cecilia perceived this change; what he might have to ſay ſhe could not conjecture, but all that fore-ran his communication convinced her it was nothing ſhe could wiſh; and much as ſhe had deſired ſome explanation of his deſigns, when the long-expected moment ſeemed arriving, prognoſtications the moſt cruel of the event, repreſſed her impatience, and deadened her curioſity. She earneſtly lamented her unfortunate reſidence in his houſe, where the adoration of every inhabitant, from his father to the loweſt ſervant, had impreſſed her with the ſtrongeſt belief of his general worthineſs, and greatly, though imperceptibly, encreaſed her regard for him, ſince ſhe had now not a doubt remaining but that ſome cruel, ſome fatal obſtacle, prohibited their union.

To collect fortitude to hear it with compoſure, was now her whole ſtudy; but though, when alone, ſhe thought any diſcovery preferable to ſuſpence, all her courage failed her when Delvile appeared, and if ſhe could not detain Lady Honoria, ſhe involuntarily followed her.

Thus paſſed four or five days, during which the health of Delvile ſeemed to ſuffer with his mind; and though he refuſed to acknowledge he was ill, it was evident to every body that he was far from well.

Mr. Delvile frequently urged him to conſent to have ſome advice; but he always revived, though with forced and tranſitory ſpirits, at the mention of a phyſician, and the propoſal ended in nothing.

Mrs. Delvile, too, at length grew alarmed; her enquiries were more penetrating and pointed, but they were not more ſucceſsful; every attack of this ſort was followed by immediate gaiety, which, however conſtrained, ſerved, for the time, to change the ſubject. Mrs. Delvile, however, was not ſoon to be deceived; ſhe watched her ſon inceſſantly, and ſeemed to feel an inquietude ſcarce leſs than his own.

Cecilia's diſtreſs was now augmented every moment, and the difficulty to conceal it grew every hour more painful; ſhe felt herſelf the cauſe of the dejection of the ſon, and that thought made her feel guilty in the preſence of the mother; the explanation ſhe expected threatened her with new miſery, and the courage to endure it ſhe tried in vain to acquire; her heart was moſt cruelly oppreſſed, apprehenſion and ſuſpenſe never left it for an inſtant; reſt abandoned her at night, and chearfulneſs by day.

At this time the two lords, Ernolf and Derford, arrived; and Cecilia, who at firſt had lamented their deſign, now rejoiced in their preſence, ſince they divided the attention of Mrs. Delvile, which ſhe began to fear was not wholly directed to her ſon, and ſince they ſaved her from having the whole force of Lady Honoria's high ſpirits and gay rattle to herſelf.

Their immediate obſervations upon the ill looks of Delvile, ſtartled both Cecilia and the mother even more than their own fears, which they had hoped were rather the reſult of apprehenſion than of reaſon. Cecilia now ſeverely reproached herſelf with having deferred the conference he was evidently ſeeking, not doubting but ſhe had contributed to his indiſpoſition, but denying him the relief he might expect from concluding the affair.

Melancholy as was this idea, it was yet a motive to overpower her reluctance, and determine her no longer to ſhun what it ſeemed neceſſary to endure.

Deep reaſoners, however, when they are alſo nice caſuiſts, frequently reſolve with a tardineſs which renders their reſolutions of no effect: this was the caſe with Cecilia; the ſame morning that ſhe came down ſtairs prepared to meet with firmneſs the blow which ſhe believed awaited her, Delvile, who ſince the arrival of the two lords, had always appeared at the general breakfaſt, acknowledged, in anſwer to his mother's earneſt enquiries, that he had a cold and head-ache: and had he, at the ſame time, acknowledged a pleuriſy and fever, the alarm inſtantly ſpread in the family could not have been greater. Mr. Delvile, furiouſly ringing the bell, ordered a man and horſe to go that moment to Dr. Lyſter, the phyſician to the family, and not to return without him if he was himſelf alive; and Mrs. Delvile, not leſs diſtreſſed, though more quiet, fixed her eyes upon her ſon, with an expreſſion of anxiety that ſhewed her whole happineſs was bound in his recovery.

Delvile endeavoured to laugh away their fears, aſſuring them he ſhould be well the next day, and repreſenting, in ridiculous terms, the perplexity of Dr. Lyſter to contrive ſome preſcription for him.

Cecilia's behaviour, guided by prudence and modeſty, was ſteady and compoſed; ſhe believed his illneſs and his uneaſineſs were the ſame, and ſhe hoped the reſolution ſhe had taken would bring relief to them both: while the terrors of Mr. and Mrs. Delvile ſeemed ſo greatly beyond the occaſion, that her own were rather leſſened than encreaſed by them.

Dr. Lyſter ſoon arrived; he was a humane and excellent phyſician, and a man of ſound judgment.

Delvile, gaily ſhaking hands with him, ſaid, "I believe, Dr. Lyſter, you little expected to meet a patient, who, were he as ſkilful, would be as able to do buſineſs as yourſelf."

"What, with ſuch a hand as this?" cried the Doctor; "come, come, you muſt not teach me my own profeſſion. When I attend a patient, I come to tell how he is myſelf, not to be told."

"He is, then, ill!" cried Mrs. Delvile; "O Mortimer, why have you thus deceived us!"

"What is his diſorder?" cried Mr. Delvile; "let us call in more help; who ſhall we ſend for, Doctor?"

And again he rang the bell.

"What now?" ſaid Dr. Lyſter, coolly; "muſt a man be dying if he is not in perfect health? We want nobody elſe; I hope I can preſcribe for a cold without demanding a conſultation."

"But are you ſure it is merely a cold?" cried Mr. Delvile; "may not ſome dreadful malady——"

"Pray, Sir, have patience," interrupted the Doctor: "Mr. Mortimer and I will have ſome diſcourſe together preſently; mean time, let us all ſit down, and behave like Chriſtians: I never talk of my art before company. 'Tis hard you won't let me be a gentleman at large for two minutes."

Lady Honoria and Cecilia would then have riſen, but neither Dr. Lyſter nor Delvile would permit them to go; and a converſation tolerably lively took place, after which, the party in general ſeparating, the Doctor accompanied Delvile to his own apartment.

Cecilia then went up ſtairs, where ſhe moſt impatiently waited ſome intelligence: none, however, arriving, in about half an hour ſhe returned to the parlour; ſhe found it empty, but was ſoon joined by Lady Honoria and Lord Ernolf.

Lady Honoria, happy in having ſomething going forward, and not much concerning herſelf whether it were good or evil, was as eager to communicate what ſhe had gathered, as Cecilia was to hear it.

"Well, my dear," ſhe cried, "ſo I don't find at laſt but that all this prodigious illneſs will be laid to your account."

"To my account?" cried Cecilia, "how is that poſſible?"

"Why this tender chicken caught cold in the ſtorm laſt week, and not being put to bed by its mama, and nurſed with white-wine whey, the poor thing has got a fever."

"He is a fine young man," ſaid Lord Ernolf; "I ſhould be ſorry any harm happened to him."

"He *was* a fine young man, my Lord," cried Lady Honoria, "but he is grown intolerably ſtupid lately; however, it's all the fault of his father and mother. Was ever any thing half ſo ridiculous as their behaviour this morning? it was with the utmoſt difficulty I forbore laughing in their faces: and really, I believe, if I was to meet with ſuch an unfortunate accident with Mr. Delvile, it would turn him to marble at once! indeed he is little better now, but ſuch an affront as that would never let him move from the ſpot where he received it."

"I forgive him, however," returned Lord Ernolf, "for his anxiety about his ſon, ſince he is the laſt of ſo ancient a family."

"That is his great misfortune, my Lord," anſwered Lady Honoria, "becauſe it is the very reaſon they make ſuch a puppet of him. If there were but a few more little maſters to dandle and fondle, I'll anſwer for it this precious Mortimer would ſoon be left to himſelf: and then, really, I believe he would be a good tolerable ſort of young man. Don't you think he would, Miſs Beverley?"

"O yes!" ſaid Cecilia, "I believe—I think ſo!"

"Nay, nay, I did not aſk if you thought him tolerable *now*, ſo no need to be frightened."

Here they were interrupted by the entrance of Dr. Lyſter.

"Well, Sir," cried Lady Honoria, "and when am I to go into mourning for my couſin *Mortimer*?"

"Why very ſoon," anſwered he, "unleſs you take better care of him. He has confeſſed to me that after being out in the ſtorm laſt Wedneſday he ſat in his wet cloaths all the evening."

"Dear," cried Lady Honoria, "and what would that do to him? I have no notion of a man's always wanting a cambric handkerchief about his throat."

"Perhaps your ladyſhip had rather make him apply it to his eyes?" cried the doctor: "however, ſitting inactive in wet cloaths would deſtroy a ſtouter man than Mr. Delvile; but he *forgot* it, he ſays! which of you two young ladies could not have given as good a reaſon?"

"Your moſt obedient," ſaid Lady Honoria; "and why ſhould not a Lady give as good a reaſon as a Gentleman?"

"I don't know," anſwered he, drily, "but from a want of practice, I believe."

"O worſe and worſe!" cried Lady Honoria; "you ſhall never be my phyſician; if I was to be attended by you, you'd make me ſick inſtead of well."

"All the better," anſwered he, "for then I muſt have the honour of attending you till I made you well inſtead of ſick." And with a good-humoured ſmile, he left them; and Lord Derford, at the ſame time, coming into the room, Cecilia contrived to ſtroll out into the park.

The account to which ſhe had been liſtening redoubled her uneaſineſs; ſhe was conſcious that whatever was the indiſpoſition of Delvile, and whether it was mental or bodily, ſhe was herſelf its occaſion: through her he had been negligent, ſhe had rendered him forgetful, and in conſulting her own fears in preference to his peace, ſhe had avoided an explanation, though he had vigilantly ſought one. *She knew not*, he told her, *half the wretchedneſs of his heart.*—Alas! thought ſhe, he little conjectures the ſtate of mine!

Lady Honoria ſuffered her not to be long alone; in about half an hour ſhe ran after her, gaily calling out, "O Miſs Beverley, you have loſt the delightfulleſt diverſion in the world! I have juſt had the moſt ridiculous ſcene with my Lord Derford that you ever heard in your life! I aſked him what put it in his head to be in love with you,—and he had the ſimplicity to anſwer, quite ſeriouſly, his father!"

"He was very right," ſaid Cecilia, "if the deſire of uniting two eſtates is to be denominated being in love; for that, moſt certainly, was put into his head by his father."

"O but you have not heard half. I told him, then, that, as a friend, in confidence I muſt acquaint him, I believed you intended to marry Mortimer—"

"Good heaven, Lady Honoria!"

"O, you ſhall hear the reaſon; becauſe,

as I aſſured him, it was proper he ſhould immediately call him to account."

"Are you mad, Lady Honoria?"

"For you know," ſaid I, "Miſs Beverley has had one duel fought for her already, and a lady who has once had that compliment paid her, always expects it from every new admirer; and I really believe your not obſerving that form, is the true cauſe of her coldneſs to you."

"Is it poſſible you can have talked ſo wildly?"

"Yes, and what is much better, he believed every word I ſaid!"

"Much better?—No, indeed, it is much worſe! and if, in fact, he is ſo uncommonly weak, I ſhall really be but little indebted to your ladyſhip for giving him ſuch notions."

"O. I would not but have done it for the world! for I never laughed ſo immoderately in my life. He began aſſuring me he was not afraid, for he ſaid he had practiſed fencing more than any thing: ſo I made him promiſe to ſend a challenge to Mortimer as ſoon as he is well enough to come down again: for Dr. Lyſter has ordered him to keep his room."

Cecilia, ſmothering her concern for this laſt piece of intelligence by pretending to feel it merely for the former, expoſtulated with Lady Honoria upon ſo miſchievous a frolic, and earneſtly entreated her to go back and contradict it all.

"No, no, not for the world!" cried ſhe; "he has not the leaſt ſpirit, and I dare ſay he would not fight to ſave the whole nation from deſtruction; but I'll make him believe that it's neceſſary, in order to give him ſomething to think of, for really his poor head is ſo vacant, that I am ſure if one might but play upon it with ſticks, it would ſound juſt like a drum."

Cecilia, finding it vain to combat with her fantaſies, was at length obliged to ſubmit.

The reſt of the day ſhe paſſed very unpleaſantly; Delvile appeared not; his father was reſtleſs and diſturbed, and his mother, though attentive to her gueſts, and for their ſakes rallying her ſpirits, was viſibly ill diſpoſed to think or to talk but of her ſon.

One diverſion, however, Cecilia found for herſelf: Delvile had a favourite ſpaniel, which, when he walked, followed him, and when he rode, ran by his horſe; this dog, who was not admitted into the houſe, ſhe now took under her own care; and ſpent almoſt the whole day out of doors, chiefly for the ſatisfaction of making him her companion.

The next morning, when Dr. Lyſter came again, ſhe kept in the way, in order to hear his opinion; and was ſitting with Lady Honoria in the parlour, when he entered it to write a preſcription.

Mrs. Delvile, in a few moments, followed him, and with a face and voice of the ten-

dereſt

verest maternal apprehenſions, ſaid, "Doctor, one thing entruſt me with immediately; I can neither bear impoſition nor ſuſpence;—you know what I would ſay!—tell me if I have any thing to fear, that my preparations may be adequate!"

"Nothing, I believe, in the world."

"You believe!" repeated Mrs. Delvile, ſtarting; "Oh, doctor!"

"Why you would not have me ſay I am *certain*, would you? theſe are no times for popery and infallibility; however, I aſſure you I think him perfectly ſafe. He has done a fooliſh and idle trick, but no man is wiſe always. We muſt get rid of his fever, and then if his cold remains, with any cough, he may make a little excurſion to Briſtol."

"To Briſtol! nay then,—I underſtand you too well!"

"No, no, you don't underſtand me at all; I don't ſend him to Briſtol becauſe he is in a bad way, but merely becauſe I mean to put him in a good one."

"Let him, then, go immediately; why ſhould he encreaſe the danger by waiting a moment? I will order—"

"Hold, hold! I know what to order myſelf! 'Tis a ſtrange thing people will always teach me my own duty! why ſhould I make a man travel ſuch weather as this in a fever? do you think I want to confine him in a mad-houſe, or be confined in one myſelf?"

"Certainly you know beſt—but ſtill, if there is any danger—"

"No, no, there is not! only we don't chuſe there ſhould be any. And how will he entertain himſelf better than by going to Briſtol? I ſend him merely on a jaunt of pleaſure; and I am ſure he will be ſafer there than ſhut up in a houſe with two ſuch young ladies as theſe."

And then he made off. Mrs. Delvile, too anxious for converſation, left the room, and Cecilia, too conſcious for ſilence, forced herſelf into diſcourſe with Lady Honoria.

Three days ſhe paſſed in this uncertainty what ſhe had to expect; blaming thoſe fears which had deferred an explanation, and tormented by Lady Honoria, whoſe raillery and levity now grew very unſeaſonable. Fidel, the favourite ſpaniel, was almoſt her only conſolation, and ſhe pleaſed herſelf not inconſiderably by making a friend of the faithful animal.

CHAP. V.

AN ANECDOTE.

ON the fourth day the houſe wore a better aſpect; Delvile's fever was gone, and Dr. Lyſter permitted him to leave his room; a cough, however, remained, and his journey to Briſtol was ſettled to take place in three days. Cecilia, knowing he was now expected down ſtairs, haſtened out of the parlour the moment ſhe had finiſhed her breakfaſt; for, affected by his illneſs, and hurt at the approaching ſeparation, ſhe dreaded the firſt meeting, and wiſhed to fortify her mind for bearing it with propriety.

In a very few minutes, Lady Honoria, running after her, entreated that ſhe would come down; "for Mortimer," ſhe cried, "is in the parlour, and the poor child is made ſo much of by its papa and mama, that I wiſh they don't half kill him by their ridiculous fondneſs. It is amazing to me he is ſo patient with them, for if they teazed me half as much, I ſhould be ready to jump up and ſhake them. But I wiſh you would come down, for, I aſſure you, it's a comical ſcene."

"Your ladyſhip is ſoon diverted! but

what is there ſo comical in the anxiety of parents for an only ſon ?"

"Lord, they don't care a ſtraw for him all the time! it's merely that he may live to keep up this old caſtle, which I hope in my heart he will pull down the moment they are dead! But do pray come; it will really give you ſpirits to ſee them all. The father keeps ringing the bell to order half a hundred pair of boots for him, and all the great coats in the county; and the mother ſits and looks as if a hearſe and mourning coach were already coming over the draw-bridge: but the moſt diverting object among them is my Lord Derford! O, it is really too entertaining to ſee him! there he ſits, thinking the whole time of his challenge! I intend to employ him all this afternoon in practiſing to ſhoot at a mark."

And then again ſhe preſſed her to join the group, and Cecilia, fearing her oppoſition might ſeem ſtrange, conſented.

Delvile aroſe at her entrance, and with tolerable ſteadineſs ſhe congratulated him on his recovery: and then, taking her uſual ſeat, employed herſelf in embroidering a ſcreen. She joined too, occaſionally, in the converſation, and obſerved, not without ſurpriſe, that Delvile ſeemed much leſs dejected than before his confinement.

Soon after, he ordered his horſe, and, accompanied by Lord Derford, rode out. Mr.

Delvile then took Lord Ernolf to ſhew him ſome intended improvements in another part of the caſtle, and Lady Honoria walked away in ſearch of any entertainment ſhe could find.

Mrs. Delvile, in better ſpirits than ſhe had been for many days, ſent for her own work, and ſitting by Cecilia, converſed with her again as in former times; mixing inſtruction with entertainment, and general ſatire with particular kindneſs, in a manner at once ſo lively and ſo flattering, that Cecilia herſelf reviving, found but little difficulty in bearing her part in the converſation.

And thus, with ſome gaiety, and tolerable eaſe, was ſpent the greateſt part of the morning; but juſt as they were talking of changing their dreſs for dinner, Lady Honoria, with an air of the utmoſt exultation, came flying into the room: "Well, ma'am," ſhe cried, "I have ſome news now that I *muſt* tell you, becauſe it will make you believe me another time: though I know it will put you in a paſſion."

"That's ſweetly deſigned, at leaſt!" ſaid Mrs. Delvile, laughing; "however, I'll truſt you, for my paſſions will not, juſt now, be irritated by ſtraws."

"Why, ma'am, don't you remember I told you when you were in town that Mr. Mortimer kept a miſtreſs—"

"Yes!" cried Mrs. Delvile, diſdainfully," and you may remember, Lady Honoria, I told you——"

"O, you would not believe a word of it! but it's all true, I aſſure you! and now he has brought her down here; he ſent for her about three weeks ago, and he has boarded her at a cottage, about half a mile from the park-gate."

Cecilia, to whom Henrietta Belfield was inſtantly preſent, changed colour repeatedly, and turned ſo extremely ſick, ſhe could with difficulty keep her ſeat. She forced herſelf, however, to continue her work, though ſhe knew ſo little what ſhe was about, that ſhe put her needle in and out of the ſame place without ceaſing.

Mean-while Mrs. Delvile, with a countenance of the utmoſt indignation, exclaimed, "Lady Honoria, if you think a tale of ſcandal ſuch as this reflects no diſgrace upon its relater, you muſt pardon me for entreating you to find an auditor more of the ſame opinion than myſelf."

"Nay, ma'am, ſince you are ſo angry, I'll tell you the whole affair, for this is but half of it. He has a child here, too,——I vow I long to ſee it!—and he is ſo fond of it that he ſpends half his time in nurſing it;—and that, I ſuppoſe, is the thing that takes him out ſo much; and I fancy, too, that's what has made him grow ſo grave, for may be he thinks it would not be pretty to be very friſky, now he's a papa."

Not only Cecilia, but Mrs. Delvile herſelf was now overpowered, and ſhe ſat for ſome time wholly ſilent and confounded. Lady Honoria then, turning to Cecilia, exclaimed, "Bleſs me, Miſs Beverley, what are you about! why that flower is the moſt ridiculous thing I ever ſaw! you have ſpoilt your whole work."

Cecilia, in the utmoſt confuſion, though pretending to laugh, then began to unpick it; and Mrs. Delvile, recovering, more calmly, though not leſs angrily, ſaid, "And has this tale the honour of being invented ſolely by your ladyſhip, or had it any other aſſiſtant?"

"O no, I aſſure you, it's no invention of mine; I had it from very good authority, upon my word. But only look at Miſs Beverley! would not one think I had ſaid that ſhe had a child herſelf? She looks as pale as death. My dear, I am ſure you can't be well?"

"I beg your pardon," cried Cecilia, forcing a ſmile, though extremely provoked with her; "I never was better."

And then, with the hope of appearing unconcerned, ſhe raiſed her head; but meeting the eyes of Mrs. Delvile fixed upon her face with a look of penetrating obſervation, abaſhed and guilty, ſhe again dropt it, and reſumed her work.

"Well, my dear," ſaid Lady Honoria, "I am ſure there is no occaſion to ſend for Dr. Lyſter to *you*, for you recover yourſelf in a moment: you have the fineſt colour now I ever ſaw; has not ſhe, Mrs. Delvile? did you ever ſee any body bluſh ſo becomingly?"

"I wiſh, Lady Honoria," ſaid Mrs. Delvile, with ſeverity, "it were poſſible to ſee *you* bluſh!"

"O but I never do! not but what it's pretty enough too; but I don't know how it is, it never happens. Now Euphraſia can bluſh from morning to night. I can't think how ſhe contrives it. Miſs Beverley, too, plays at it vaſtly well; ſhe's red and white, and white and red half a dozen times in a minute. Eſpecially," looking at her archly, and lowering her voice, "if you talk to her of Mortimer!"

"No, indeed! no ſuch thing!" cried Cecilia, with ſome reſentment, and again looking up; but glancing her eyes towards Mrs. Delvile, and again meeting hers, filled with the ſtrongeſt expreſſion of enquiring ſolicitude, unable to ſuſtain their inquiſition, and ſhocked to find herſelf thus watchfully obſerved, ſhe returned in haſty confuſion to her employment.

"Well, my dear," cried Lady Honoria,

again, " but what are you about now? do you intend to unpick the whole ſcreen?"

"How can ſhe tell what ſhe is doing," ſaid Mrs. Delvile, with quickneſs, " if you torment her thus inceſſantly? I will take you away from her, that ſhe may have a little peace. You ſhall do me the honour to attend my toilette, and acquaint me with ſome farther particulars of this extraordinary diſcovery."

Mrs. Delvile then left the room, but Lady Honoria, before ſhe followed her, ſaid, in a low voice, " Pity me, Miſs Beverley, if you have the leaſt good-nature! I am now going to hear a lecture of two hours long!"

Cecilia, left to herſelf, was in a perturbation almoſt inſupportable; Delvile's myſterious conduct ſeemed the reſult of ſome entanglement of vice; Henrietta Belfield, the artleſs Henrietta Belfield, ſhe feared had been abuſed, and her own ill-fated partiality, which now more than ever ſhe wiſhed unknown even to herſelf, was evidently betrayed where moſt the dignity of her mind made her deſire it to be concealed!

In this ſtate of ſhame, regret, and reſentment, which made her forget to change her dreſs, or her place, ſhe was ſuddenly ſurpriſed by Delvile.

Starting and colouring, ſhe buſied herſelf with collecting her work, that ſhe might hurry out of the room. Delvile, though

ſilent

taken the trouble, ſhe ſaid, to ſift the whole affair, in order to ſhame Lady Honoria by a pointed conviction of what ſhe had invented, and to trace from the foundation the circumſtances whence her ſurmiſes or report had ſprung.

Delvile, it ſeems, about a fortnight before the preſent time, in one of his morning walks, had obſerved a gipſey ſitting by the ſide of the high road, who ſeemed extremely ill, and who had a very beautiful child tied to her back.

Struck with the baby, he ſtopt to enquire to whom it belonged; to herſelf, ſhe ſaid, and begged his charity with the moſt pitiable cries of diſtreſs; telling him that ſhe was travelling to join ſome of her fraternity, who were in a body near Bath, but was ſo ill with an ague and fever, that ſhe feared ſhe ſhould die on the road.

Delvile deſired her to go to the next cottage, and promiſed to pay for her board there till ſhe was better. He then ſpoke to the man and his wife, who owned it, to take them in, who, glad to oblige his Honour, inſtantly conſented; and he had ſince called twice to ſee in what manner they went on.

"How ſimple," continued Mrs. Delvile, "is a matter of fact in itſelf, and how complex when embelliſhed! This tale has been told by the cottagers to our ſervants; it has travelled, probably gaining ſomething from every mouth, to Lady Honoria's maid; and, having reached her ladyſhip, was ſwelled in a moment into all we heard! I think, however, that for ſome time at leaſt, her levity will be rather leſs daring. I have not, in this affair, at all ſpared her; I made her hear from Mortimer himſelf the little ſtory as it happened; I then carried her to the cottage, where we had the whole matter confirmed; and I afterwards inſiſted upon being told myſelf by her maid all ſhe had related to her lady, that ſhe might thus be unanſwerably convicted of inventing whatever ſhe omitted. I have occaſioned her ſome confuſion, and, for the moment, a little reſentment; but ſhe is ſo volatile that neither will laſt; and though, with regard to my own family, I may perhaps have rendered her more cautious, I fear, with regard to the world in general, ſhe is utterly incorrigible, becauſe it has neither pleaſure nor advantage to offer, that can compenſate for the deprivation of relating one ſtaring ſtory, or ridiculous anecdote."

And then, wiſhing her good night, ſhe added, "I make not any apology for this detail, which you owe not, believe me, to a mother's folly, but, if I know myſelf at all, to a love of truth and juſtice. Mortimer, independent of all connection with me, cannot but to every body appear of a character which may be deemed even exemplary; calumny, therefore, falling upon ſuch a ſubject, injures not only himſelf but ſociety, ſince it weakens all confidence in virtue, and ſtrengthens the ſcepticiſm of depravity."

She then left her.

"Ah!" thought Cecilia, "to me, at leaſt, this ſolicitude for his fame needs no apology! Humane and generous Delvile! never, again, will I a moment doubt your worthineſs!" And then, cheriſhing that darling idea, ſhe forgot all her cares and apprehenſions, her quarrel, her ſuſpicions, and the approaching ſeparation, and, recompenſed for every thing by this refutation of his guilt, ſhe haſtened to bed, and compoſed herſelf to reſt.

CHAP. VI.

A CONFERENCE.

EARLY the next morning Cecilia had a viſit from Lady Honoria, who came to tell her ſtory her own way, and laugh at the anxiety of Mrs. Delvile, and the trouble ſhe had taken; "for, after all, continued ſhe, what did the whole matter ſignify? and how could I poſſibly help the miſtake? when I heard of his paying for a woman's board, that was ſo natural as to ſuppoſe ſhe muſt be his miſtreſs? eſpecially as there was a child in the caſe. O how I wiſh you had been with us! you never ſaw ſuch a ridiculous ſight in your life; away we went in the chaiſe full drive to the cottage, frightening all the people almoſt into fits; out came the poor woman, away ran the poor man,—both of them thought the end of the world at hand! The gipſey was beſt off, for ſhe went to her old buſineſs, and began begging. I aſſure you, I believe ſhe would be very pretty if ſhe was not ſo ill, and ſo I dare ſay Mortimer thought too, or I fancy he would not have taken ſuch care of her."

"Fie; fie, Lady Honoria! will nothing bring conviction to you?"

"Nay, you know, there's no harm in that, for why ſhould not pretty people live as well as ugly ones? There's no occaſion to leave nothing in the world but frights. I looked hard at the baby, to ſee if it was like Mortimer, but I could not make it out; thoſe young things are like nothing. I tried if it would talk, for I wanted ſadly to make it call Mrs. Delvile grandmama; however, the little urchin could ſay nothing to be underſtood. O what a rage would Mrs. Delvile have been in! I ſuppoſe this whole caſtle would hardly have been thought heavy enough to cruſh ſuch an inſolent brat, though it were to have fallen upon it all at a blow!"

Thus rattled this light-hearted lady till the family was aſſembled to breakfaſt; and then Cecilia, ſoftened towards Delvile by newly-excited admiration, as well as by the abſence which would ſeparate them the following day, intended, by every little courteous office in her power, to make her peace with him before his departure: but ſhe obſerved, with much chagrin, that Mrs. Delvile never ceaſed to watch her, which, added to an air of pride in the coldneſs of Delvile, that he had never before aſſumed, diſcouraged her from making the attempt, and compelled her to ſeem quiet and unconcerned.

As ſoon as breakfaſt was over, the gentlemen all rode or walked out; and when the ladies were by themſelves, Lady Honoria ſuddenly exclaimed, "Mrs. Delvile, I can't imagine for what reaſon you ſend Mr. Mortimer to Briſtol."

"For a reaſon, Lady Honoria, that with all your wildneſs, I ſhould be very ſorry you ſhould know better by experience."

"Why then, ma'am, had we not better make a party, and all go? Miſs Beverley, ſhould you like to join it? I am afraid it would be vaſtly diſagreeable to you."

Cecilia, now again was *red and white and white and red, a dozen times in a minute*; and Mrs. Delvile, riſing and taking her hand, expreſſively ſaid, "Miſs Beverley, you have a thouſand times too much ſenſibility for this that cap of a companion. I believe I ſhall puniſh her by taking you away from her all this morning; will you come and ſit with me in the dreſſing room?"

Cecilia aſſented without daring to look at her, and followed in trembling, up ſtairs. Something of importance, ſhe fancied, would enſue, her ſecret ſhe ſaw was revealed, and therefore ſhe could form no conjecture but that Delvile would be the ſubject of their diſcourſe: yet whether to explain his behaviour, or plead his cauſe, whether to expreſs her ſeparate approbation, or communicate ſome intelligence from himſelf, ſhe had neither time, opportunity, nor clue to unravel. All that was undoubted ſeemed the affection of Mrs. Delvile, all that, on her own part, could be reſolved, was to ſuppreſs her partiality till ſhe knew if it might properly be avowed.

Mrs. Delvile, who ſaw her perturbation, led immediately to ſubjects of indifference, and talked upon them ſo long, and with ſo much eaſe, that Cecilia, recovering her compoſure, began to think ſhe had been miſtaken, and that nothing was intended but a tranquil converſation.

As ſoon, however, as ſhe had quietted her apprehenſions, ſhe ſat ſilent herſelf, with a look that Cecilia eaſily conſtrued into thoughtful perplexity in what manner ſhe ſhould introduce what ſhe meant to communicate.

This pauſe was ſucceeded by her ſpeaking of Lady Honoria; "how wild, how careleſs, how incorrigible ſhe is! ſhe loſt her mother early; and the Duke, who idolizes her, and who, marrying very late, is already an old man, ſhe rules entirely; with him, and a ſupple governeſs, who has neither courage to oppoſe her, nor heart to wiſh well but to her own intereſt, ſhe has lived almoſt wholly. Lately, indeed, ſhe has come more into the world, but without even a deſire of improvement, and with no view and no thought but to gratify her idle humour by laughing at whatever goes forward."

"She certainly neither wants parts nor diſcernment," ſaid Cecilia; "and, when my mind is not occupied by other matters, I find her converſation entertaining and agreeable."

"Yes," ſaid Mrs. Delvile, "but that light ſort of wit which attacks, with equal alacrity, what is ſerious or what is gay, is twenty times offenſive, to once that it is exhilarating; ſince it ſhews that while its only aim is ſelf-diverſion, it has the moſt inſolent negligence with reſpect to any pain it gives to others. The rank of Lady Honoria, though it has not rendered her proud, nor even made her conſcious ſhe has any dignity to ſupport, has yet given her ſaucy indifference whom ſhe pleaſes or hurts, that borders upon what in a woman is of all things the moſt odious, a daring defiance of the world and its opinions."

Cecilia, never leſs diſpoſed to enter upon her defence, made but little anſwer; and, ſoon after, Mrs. Delvile added, "I heartily wiſh ſhe were properly eſtabliſhed; and yet, according to the pernicious manners and maxims of the preſent age, ſhe is perhaps more ſecure from miſconduct while ſingle, than ſhe will be when married. Her father, I fear, will leave her too much to herſelf, and in that caſe I ſcarce know what may become of her; ſhe has neither judgment nor principle to direct her choice, and therefore, in all probability, the ſame whim which one day will guide it, will the next lead her to repent it."

Again they were both ſilent; and then Mrs. Delvile, gravely, yet with energy exclaimed, "How few are there, how very few, who marry at once upon principles rational, and feelings pleaſant! intereſt and inclination are eternally at ſtrife, and where either is wholly ſacrificed, the other is inadequate to happineſs. Yet how rarely do they divide the attention! the young are raſh, and the aged are mercenary; their deliberations are never in concert, their views are ſcarce ever blended; one vanquiſhes, and the other ſubmits; neither party temporizes, and commonly each is unhappy."

"The time," ſhe continued, "is now arrived when reflections of this ſort cannot too ſeriouſly occupy me; the errors I have obſerved in others, I would fain avoid committing; yet ſuch is the blindneſs of ſelf-love, that perhaps, even at the moment I cenſure them, I am falling, without conſciouſneſs, into the ſame! nothing, however, ſhall through negligence be wrong; for where is the ſon who merits care and attention, if Mortimer from his parents deſerves not to meet them?"

The expectations of Cecilia were now again awakened, and awakened with freſh terrors, leſt Mrs. Delvile, from compaſſion, meant to offer her ſervices; vigorouſly, therefore, ſhe determined to exert herſelf, and rather give up Mortimer and all thoughts of him for ever, than ſubmit to receive aſſiſtance in perſuading him to the union.

"Mr. Delvile," ſhe continued, "is moſt earneſt and impatient that ſome alliance ſhould take place without farther delay; and for myſelf, could I ſee him with propriety and with happineſs diſpoſed of, what a weight of anxiety would be removed from my heart!"

Cecilia now made an effort to ſpeak, attempting to ſay, "Certainly, it is a matter of great conſequence;" but ſo low was her voice, and ſo confuſed her manner, that Mrs. Delvile, though attentively liſtening, heard not a word. She forbore, however, to make her repeat what ſhe ſaid, and went on herſelf as if ſpeaking in anſwer.

"*Not* only his own, but the peace of his whole family will depend upon his election, ſince he is the laſt of his race. This caſtle and eſtate, and another in the north, were entailed upon him by the late Lord Delvile, his grandfather, who diſobliged by his eldeſt ſon, the preſent lord, left every thing he had power to diſpoſe of to his ſecond ſon, Mr. Delvile, and at his death, to his grandſon, Mortimer. And even the preſent lord, though always at variance with his brother, is fond of his nephew, and has declared him his heir. I, alſo, have one ſiſter, who is rich, who has no children, and who has made the ſame declaration. Yet though with ſuch high expectations, he muſt not connect himſelf imprudently; for his paternal eſtate wants repair, and he is well entitled with a wife to expect what it requires."

Moſt true! thought Cecilia, yet aſhamed of her recent failure, ſhe applied herſelf to her work, and would not again try to ſpeak.

"He is amiable, accompliſhed, well educated, and well-born; far may we look, and not meet with his equal; no woman need diſdain, and few women would refuſe him."

Cecilia bluſhed her concurrence; yet could well at that moment have ſpared hearing the eulogy.

"Yet, how difficult," ſhe continued, "to find a proper alliance! there are many who have ſome recommendations, but who is there wholly unexceptionable?"

This queſtion ſeemed unanſwerable, nor could Cecilia deviſe what it meant.

"Girls of high family have but ſeldom large fortunes, ſince the heads of their houſe commonly require their whole wealth for the ſupport of their own dignity; while, on the other hand, girls of large fortune are frequently ignorant, inſolent, or low born; kept up by their friends leſt they ſhould fall a prey to adventurers, they have no acquaintance with the world, and little enlargement from education; their inſtructions are limited to a few merely youthful accompliſhments: the firſt notion they imbibe is of their own importance, the firſt leſſon they are taught is the value of riches; and even from their cradles, their little minds are narrowed, and their ſelf-ſufficiency is excited, by cautions to beware of fortune-hunters, and aſſurances that the whole world will be at their feet. Among ſuch ſhould we ſeek a companion for Mortimer? ſurely not. Formed for domeſtic happineſs, and delighting in elegant ſociety, his mind would diſdain an alliance in which its affections had no ſhare."

Cecilia, colouring and trembling, thought now the moment of her trial was approaching, and half mortified and half frightened, prepared herſelf to ſuſtain it with firmneſs.

"I venture, therefore, my dear Miſs Beverley, to ſpeak to you upon this ſubject as a *friend* who will have patience to hear my perplexities; you ſee upon what they hang,—where the birth is ſuch as Mortimer Delvile may claim, the fortune generally fails; and where the fortune is adequate to his expectations, the birth yet more frequently would diſgrace us."

Cecilia, aſtoniſhed by this ſpeech, and quite off her guard from momentary ſurpriſe, involuntarily raiſed her head to look at Mrs. Delvile, in whoſe countenance ſhe obſerved the moſt anxious concern, though her manner of ſpeaking had ſeemed placid and compoſed.

"Once," ſhe continued, without appearing to remark the emotion of her auditor, "Mr. Delvile thought of uniting him with his couſin Lady Honoria; but he never could endure the propoſal; and who ſhall blame his repugnance? her ſiſter, indeed, Lady Euphraſia, is much preferable, her education has been better, and her fortune is much more conſiderable. At preſent, however, Mortimer ſeems greatly averſe to her, and who has a right to be difficult, if we deny it to him?"

Wonder, uncertainty, expectation, and ſuſpence, now all attacked Cecilia, and all harraſſed her with redoubled violence; why ſhe was called to this conference ſhe knew not; the approbation ſhe had thought ſo certain, ſhe doubted, and the propoſal of aſſiſtance ſhe had apprehended, ſhe ceaſed to think would be offered: ſome fearful myſtery, ſome cruel obſcurity, ſtill clouded all her proſpects, and not merely obſtructed her view of the future, but made what was immediately before her gloomy and indiſtinct.

The ſtate of her mind ſeemed read by Mrs. Delvile, who examined her with eyes of ſuch penetrating keenneſs, that they rather made diſcoveries than enquiries. She was ſilent ſome time, and looked irreſolute, how to proceed; but at length ſhe aroſe, and taking Cecilia by the hand, who almoſt drew it back from her dread of what would follow, ſhe ſaid, "I will torment you no more, my ſweet young friend, with perplexities which you cannot relieve: this only I will ſay, and then drop the ſubject for ever; when my ſolicitude for Mortimer is removed, and he is eſtabliſhed to the ſatisfaction of us all, no care will remain in the heart of his mother, half ſo fervent, ſo anxious, and ſo ſincere as the diſpoſal of my amiable Cecilia, for whoſe welfare and happineſs my wiſhes are even maternal."

She then kiſſed her glowing cheek, and perceiving her almoſt ſtupified with aſtoniſhment, ſpared her any effort to ſpeak, by haſtily leaving her in poſſeſſion of her room.

Undeceived in her expectations and chilled in her hopes, the heart of Cecilia no longer ſtruggled to ſuſtain its dignity, or conceal its tenderneſs; the conflict was at an end; Mrs. *Delvile* had been open, though her ſon was myſterious; but, in removing her doubts, ſhe had bereft her of her peace. She now found her own miſtake in building upon her approbation; ſhe ſaw nothing was leſs in her intentions, and that even when moſt ardent in affectionate regard, ſhe ſeparated her intereſt from that of her ſon, as if their union was a matter of utter impoſſibility. "Yet why," cried Cecilia, "oh why is it deemed ſo! that ſhe loves me, ſhe is ever eager to proclaim, that my fortune would be peculiarly uſeful, ſhe makes not a ſecret, and that I, at leaſt, ſhould ſtart no inſuperable objections, ſhe has, alas! but too obviouſly diſcovered! Has ſhe doubts of her ſon?—no, ſhe has too much diſcernment; the father, then, the haughty, impracticable father, has deſtined him for ſome woman of rank, and will liſten to no other alliance."

This notion ſomewhat ſoothed her in the diſappointment ſhe ſuffered; yet to know herſelf betrayed to Mrs. Delvile, and to ſee no other conſequence enſue but that of exciting a tender compaſſion, which led her to diſcourage, from benevolence, hopes too high to be indulged, was a mortification ſo ſevere, that it cauſed her a deeper depreſſion of ſpirits than any occurrence of her life had yet occaſioned. "What Henrietta Belfield is to me," ſhe cried, "I am to Mrs. Delvile! but what in her is amiable and artleſs, in me is diſgraceful and unworthy. And this is the ſituation which ſo long I have deſired! This is the change of habitation which I thought would make me ſo happy! oh who can chuſe, who can judge for himſelf? who can point out the road to his own felicity, or decide upon the ſpot where his peace will be enſured!" Still, however, ſhe had ſomething to do, ſome ſpirit to exert, and ſome fortitude to manifeſt: Mortimer, ſhe was certain, ſuſpected not his own power; his mother, ſhe knew, was both too good and too wiſe to reveal it to him; and ſhe determined, by caution and firmneſs upon his leave-taking and departure, to retrieve, if poſſible, that credit with Mrs. Delvile, which ſhe feared her betrayed, ſuſceptibility had weakened.

As ſoon, therefore, as ſhe recovered from her conſternation, ſhe quitted Mrs. Delvile's apartment, and ſeeking Lady Honoria herſelf, determined not to ſpend even a moment alone, till Mortimer was gone; leſt the ſadneſs of her reflections ſhould overpower her reſolution, and give a melancholy to her air and manner which he might attribute, with but too much juſtice, to concern upon his own account.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

An Attack.

AT dinner, with the aſſiſtance of Lord Ernolf, who was moſt happy to give it, Cecilia ſeemed tolerably eaſy. Lord Derford, too, encouraged by his father, endeavoured to engage ſome ſhare of her attention; but he totally failed; her mind was ſuperior to little arts of coquetry, and her pride had too much dignity to evaporate in pique; ſhe determined, therefore, at this time, as at all others, to be conſiſtent in ſhewing him he had no chance of her favour.

At tea, when they were again aſſembled, Mortimer's journey was the only ſubject of diſcourſe, and it was agreed that he ſhould ſet out very early in the morning, and, as the weather was extremely hot, not travel at all in the middle of the day.

Lady Honoria then, in a whiſper to Cecilia, ſaid, "I ſuppoſe, Miſs Beverley, you will riſe with the lark to-morrow morning? for your health, I mean. Early riſing, you know, is vaſtly good for you."

Cecilia, affecting not to underſtand her, ſaid ſhe ſhould riſe, ſhe ſuppoſed, at her uſual time.

"I'll tell Mortimer, however," returned her ladyſhip, "to look up at your window before he goes off; for if he will play Romeo, you, I dare ſay, will play Juliet, and this old caſtle is quite the thing for the muſty family of the Capulets: I dare ſay Shakeſpear thought of it when he wrote of them."

"Say to him what you pleaſe for yourſelf," cried Cecilia, "but let me entreat you to ſay nothing for me."

"And my Lord Derford," continued ſhe, "will make an exceſſive pretty Paris; for he is vaſtly in love, though he has got nothing to ſay; but what ſhall we do for a Mercutio? we may find 500 whining Romeos to one gay and charming Mercutio. Beſides, Mrs. Delvile, to do her juſtice, is really too good for the old Nurſe, though Mr. Delvile himſelf may ſerve for all the Capulets and all the Montagues at once, for he has pride enough for both their houſes, and twenty more beſides. By the way, if I don't take care, I ſhall have this Romeo run away before I have made my little dainty county Paris pick a quarrel with him."

She then walked up to one of the windows, and motioning Lord Derford to follow her, Cecilia heard her ſay to him, "Well, my lord, have you writ your letter? and *have you ſent it?* Miſs Beverley, I aſſure you, will be charmed beyond meaſure by ſuch a piece of gallantry."

"No, ma'am, anſwered the ſimple young lord, "I have not ſent it yet, for I have only writ a foul copy."

"O my lord," cried ſhe, "that is the very thing you ought to ſend! a foul copy of a challenge is always better than a fair one, for it looks written with more agitation. I am vaſtly glad you mentioned that."

Cecilia then, riſing and joining them, ſaid, "What miſchief is Lady Honoria about now? we muſt all be upon our guards, my lord, for ſhe has a ſpirit of diverſion that will not ſpare us."

"Pray why do you interfere?" cried Lady Honoria, and then, in a lower voice, ſhe added, "what do you apprehend? do you ſuppoſe Mortimer cannot manage ſuch a poor little ideot as this?"

"I don't ſuppoſe any thing about the matter!"

"Well, then, don't interrupt my operations. Lord Derford, Miſs Beverley has been whiſpering me, that if you put this ſcheme in execution, ſhe ſhall find you, ever after, irreſiſtible."

"Lord Derford, I hope," ſaid Cecilia, laughing, "is too well acquainted with your ladyſhip to be in any danger of credulity."

"Vaſtly well!" cried ſhe, "I ſee you are determined to provoke me; ſo if you ſpoil my ſchemes, I will ſpoil yours, and tell a certain gentleman your tender terrors for his ſafety."

Cecilia now, extremely alarmed, moſt earneſtly entreated her to be quiet; but the diſcovery of her fright only excited her ladyſhip's laughter, and, with a look the moſt miſchievouſly wicked, ſhe called out, "Pray, Mr. Mortimer, come hither!"

Mortimer inſtantly obeyed; and Cecilia at the ſame moment would with pleaſure have endured almoſt any puniſhment to have been twenty miles off.

"I have ſomething," continued her ladyſhip, "of the utmoſt conſequence to communicate to you. We have been ſettling an admirable plan for you; will you promiſe to be guided by us if I tell it you?"

"O certainly!" cried he; "to doubt that would diſgrace us all round."

"Well, then,—Miſs Beverley, have you any objection to my proceeding?"

"None at all!" anſwered Cecilia, who had the underſtanding to know that the greateſt excitement to ridicule is oppoſition.

"Well, then, I muſt tell you," ſhe continued, "it is the advice of us all, that as ſoon as you come to the poſſeſſion of your eſtate, you make ſome capital alterations in this ancient caſtle."

Cecilia, greatly relieved, could with gratitude have embraced her: and Mortimer, very certain that ſuch rattle was all her own, promiſed the umoſt ſubmiſſion to her orders, and begged her farther directions, declaring that he could not, at leaſt, deſire a fairer architect.

"What we mean," ſaid ſhe, "may be effected with the utmoſt eaſe: it is only to take out theſe old windows, and fix ſome thick iron grates in their place, and ſo turn the caſtle into a gaol for the county."

Mortimer laughed heartily at this propoſition; but his father, unfortunately hearing it, ſternly advanced, and with great auſterity ſaid, "If I thought my ſon capable of putting ſuch an inſult upon his anceſtors, whatever may be the value I feel for him, I would baniſh him my preſence for ever."

"Dear Sir," cried Lady Honoria, "how would his anceſtors ever know it?"

"How?—why—that is a very extraordinary queſtion, Lady Honoria!"

Beſides, Sir, I dare ſay the ſheriff, or the mayor and corporation, or ſome of thoſe ſort of people, would give him money enough, for the uſe of it, to run him up a mighty pretty neat little box ſomewhere near Richmond."

"A box!" exclaimed he indignantly; "a neat little box for the heir of an eſtate ſuch as this!"

"I only mean," cried ſhe, giddily, "that he might have ſome place a little more pleaſant to live in, for really that old moat and draw-bridge are enough to vapour him to death; I cannot for my life imagine any uſe they are of: unleſs, indeed, to frighten away the deer, for nothing elſe offers to come over. But, if you were to turn the houſe into a gaol—"

"A gaol?" cried Mr. Delvile, ſtill more angrily, "your ladyſhip muſt pardon me if I entreat you not to mention that word again when you are pleaſed to ſpeak of Delvile caſtle."

"Dear Sir, why not?"

"Becauſe it is a term that, in itſelf, from a young lady, has a ſound peculiarly improper; and which, applied to any gentleman's ancient family ſeat,—a thing, Lady Honoria, always reſpectable, however lightly ſpoken of!—has an effect the leaſt agreeable that can be deviſed: for it implies an idea either that the family, or the manſion, is going into decay."

"Well, Sir, you know, with regard to the manſion, it is certainly very true; for all that other ſide, by the old tower, looks as if it would fall upon one's head every time one is forced to paſs it."

"I proteſt, Lady Honoria," ſaid Mr. Delvile, "that old tower, of which you are pleaſed to ſpeak ſo ſlightingly, is the moſt honourable teſtimony to the antiquity of the caſtle of any now remaining, and I would not part with it for all the new boxes, as you ſtile them, in the kingdom."

"I am ſure I am very glad of it, Sir, for I dare ſay nobody would give even one of them for it."

"Pardon me, Lady Honoria, you are greatly miſtaken; they would give a thouſand; ſuch a thing, belonging to a man from his own anceſtors, is invaluable."

"Why, dear Sir, what in the world could they do with it? unleſs, indeed, they were to let ſome man paint it for an opera ſcene."

"A worthy uſe, indeed!" cried Mr. Delvile, more and more affronted: "and pray does your ladyſhip talk thus to my Lord Duke?"

"O yes, and he never minds it at all."

"It were ſtrange if he did!" cried Mrs. Delvile; "my only aſtoniſhment is that any body can be found who *does* mind it."

"Why now, Mrs. Delvile," ſhe anſwered, "pray be ſincere; can you poſſibly think this gothic ugly old place at all comparable to any of the new villas about town?"

"Gothic ugly old place!" repeated Mr. Delvile, in utter amazement at her dauntleſs flightineſs; "your ladyſhip really does my humble dwelling too much honour!"

"Lord, I beg a thouſand pardons!" cried ſhe, "I really did not think of what I was ſaying. Come, dear Miſs Beverley, and [illegible] to walk out with me, for I am too much ſhocked to ſtay a moment longer."

And then, taking Cecilia by the arm, ſhe hurried her into the park, through a door which led thither from the parlour.

"For heaven's ſake, Lady Honoria," ſaid Cecilia, "could you find no better entertainment for Mr. Delvile than ridiculing his own houſe?"

"O," cried ſhe, laughing, "did you never hear us quarrel before? why when I was here laſt ſummer, I uſed to affront him ten times a day."

"And was that a regular ceremony?"

"No, really, I did not do it purpoſely; but it ſo happened; either by talking of the caſtle, or the tower, or the draw-bridge, or the fortifications; or wiſhing they were all employed to fill up that odious moat; or ſomething of that ſort; for you know a ſmall matter will put him out of humour."

"And do you call it ſo ſmall a matter, to wiſh a man's whole habitation annihilated?"

"Lord, I don't wiſh any thing about it! I only ſay ſo to provoke him."

"And what ſtrange pleaſure can that give you?"

"O the greateſt in the world! I take much delight in ſeeing any body in a paſſion. It makes them look ſo exceſſively ugly!"

"And is that the way you like *every* body ſhould look, Lady Honoria?"

"O my dear, if you mean *me*, I never was in a paſſion twice in my life: for as ſoon as ever I have provoked the people, I always run away. But ſometimes I am in a dreadful fright leſt they ſhould ſee me laugh, for they make ſuch horrid grimaces it is hardly poſſible to look at them. When my father has been angry with me, I have ſometimes been obliged to pretend I was crying, by way of excuſe for putting my handkerchief to my face: for really he looks ſo exceſſively hideous, you would ſuppoſe he was making mouths, like the children, merely to frighten one."

"Amazing!" exclaimed Cecilia, "your ladyſhip can, indeed, never want diverſion, to find it in the anger of your father. But does it give you no other ſenſation? are you not afraid?"

"O never! what can he do to me, you know? he can only ſtorm a little, and ſwear a little, for he always ſwears when he is angry; and perhaps order me to my own room; and ten to one but that happens to be the very thing I want; for we never quarrel but when we are alone, and then it's ſo dull, I am always wiſhing to run away."

"And can you take no other method of leaving him?"

Why I think none ſo eaſily; and it can do him no harm, you know; I often tell him, when we make friends, that if it were not for a poſtilion and his daughter, he would be quite out of practice in ſcolding and ſwearing: for whenever he is upon the road he does nothing elſe: though why he is in ſuch a hurry, nobody can divine, for go whither he will he has nothing to do."

Thus ran on this flighty lady, happy in high animal ſpirits, and careleſs who was otherwiſe, till, at ſome diſtance, they perceived Lord Derford, who was approaching to join them.

"Miſs Beverley," cried ſhe, "here comes your adorer: I ſhall therefore only walk on till we arrive at that large oak, and then make him proſtrate himſelf at your feet, and leave you together."

"Your ladyſhip is extremely good! but I am glad to be apprized of your intention, as it will enable me to ſave you that trouble."

She then turned quick back, and paſſing Lord Derford, who ſtill walked on towards Lady Honoria, ſhe returned to the houſe: but upon entering the parlour, found all the company diſperſed, Delvile alone excepted, who was walking about the room, with his tablets in his hand, in which he had been writing.

From a mixture of ſhame and ſurpriſe, Cecilia, at the ſight of him, was involuntarily retreating; but, haſtening to the door, he called out in a reproachful tone, "Will *you not* even enter the ſame room with me?"

"O

"O yes," cried ſhe, returning; "I was only afraid I diſturbed you."

"No, madam," anſwered he, gravely; "you are the only perſon who could *not* diſturb me, ſince my employment was making memorandums for a letter to yourſelf: with which, however, I did not deſire to importune you, but that you have denied me the honour of even a five minutes audience."

Cecilia, in the utmoſt confuſion at this attack, knew not whether to ſtand ſtill or proceed; but, as he preſently continued his ſpeech, ſhe found ſhe had no choice but to ſtay.

"I ſhould be ſorry to quit this place, eſpecially as the length of my abſence is extremely uncertain, while I have the unhappineſs to be under your diſpleaſure, without making ſome little attempt to apologize for the behaviour which incurred it. Muſt I, then, finiſh my letter, or will you at laſt deign to hear me?"

"My diſpleaſure, Sir," ſaid Cecilia, "died with its occaſion; I beg, therefore, that it may reſt no longer in your remembrance."

"I meant not, madam, to infer, that the ſubject or indeed that the object merited your deliberate attention; I ſimply wiſh to explain what may have appeared myſterious in my conduct, and for what may have ſeemed ſtill more cenſurable, to beg your pardon."

Cecilia now, recovered from her firſt apprehenſions, and calmed, becauſe piqued, by the calmneſs with which he ſpoke himſelf, made no oppoſition to his requeſt, but ſuffering him to ſhut both the door leading into the garden, and that which led into the hall, ſhe ſeated herſelf at one of the windows, determined to liſten with intrepidity to this long-expected explanation.

The preparations, however, which he made to obviate being overheard, added to the ſteadineſs with which Cecilia waited his farther proceedings, ſoon robbed him of the courage with which he began the aſſault, and evidently gave him a wiſh of retreating himſelf.

At length, after much heſitation, he ſaid, "This indulgence, madam, deſerves my moſt grateful acknowledgments; it is, indeed, what I had little right, and ſtill leſs reaſon, after the ſeverity I have met with from you, to expect."

And here, at the very mention of ſeverity, his courage, called upon by his pride, inſtantly returned, and he went on with the ſame ſpirit he had begun.

"That ſeverity, however, I mean not to lament; on the contrary, in a ſituation ſuch as mine, it was perhaps the firſt bleſſing I could receive; I have found from it, indeed, more advantage and relief than from all that philoſophy, reflection, or fortitude could offer. It has ſhewn me the vanity of bewailing the *barrier* placed by fate to my wiſhes, ſince it has

has ſhewn me that another, leſs inevitable, but equally inſuperable, would have oppoſed them. I have determined, therefore, after a ſtruggle I muſt confeſs the moſt painful, to deny myſelf the dangerous ſolace of your ſociety, and endeavour, by joining diſſipation to reaſon, to forget the too great pleaſure which hitherto it has afforded me."

"Eaſy, ſir," cried Cecilia, "will be your taſk: I can only wiſh the re eſtabliſhment of your health may be found no more difficult."

"Ah, madam," cried he, with a reproachful ſmile, "*he jeſts at ſcars who never felt a wound!*—but this is a ſtrain in which I have no right to talk, and I will neither offend your delicacy, nor my own integrity, by endeavouring to work upon the generoſity of your diſpoſition in order to excite your compaſſion. Not ſuch was the motive with which I begged this audience; but merely a deſire, before I tear myſelf away, to open to you my heart, without palliation or reſerve."

He pauſed a few moments; and Cecilia finding her ſuſpicions juſt that this interview was meant to be final, conſidered that her trial, however ſevere, would be ſhort, and called forth all her reſolution to ſuſtain it with ſpirit.

"Long before I had the honour of your acquaintance," he continued, "your character and your accompliſhments were known to me: Mr. Biddulph of Suffolk, who was my firſt friend at Oxford, and with whom my intimacy is ſtill undiminiſhed, was early ſenſible of your excellencies: we correſponded, and his letters were filled with your praiſes. He confeſſed to me, that his admiration had been unfortunate:—alas! I might now make the ſame confeſſion to him?"

Mr. Biddulph, among many of the neighbouring gentlemen, had made propoſals to the Dean for Cecilia, which, at her deſire, were rejected.

"When Mr. Harrel ſaw maſks in Portman-Square, my curioſity to behold a lady ſo adored, and ſo cruel, led me thither; your dreſs made you eaſily diſtinguiſhed.—Ah, Miſs Beverley! I venture not to mention what I then felt for my friend; I will only ſay that ſomething which I felt for myſelf, warned me inſtantly to avoid you, ſince the clauſe in your uncle's will was already well known to me."

Now, then, at laſt, thought Cecilia, all perplexity is over!—the change of name is the obſtacle; He inherits all the pride of his family,—and therefore to that family will I unrepining leave him!

"This warning," he continued, "I ſhould not have diſregarded, had I not, at the opera, been deceived into a belief you were engaged. I then wiſhed no longer to ſhun you; bound *in honour* to forbear all efforts at ſupplanting a man, to whom I thought you almoſt united, I conſidered you already as married, and eagerly as I ſought your ſociety, I ſought it not with more pleaſure than innocence. Yet even then, to be candid, I found in myſelf a reſtleſſneſs about your affairs that kept me in eternal perturbation: but I flattered myſelf it was mere curioſity, and only excited by the perpetual change of opinion to which occaſion gave riſe, concerning which was the happy man."

"I am ſorry," ſaid Cecilia, coolly, "there was any ſuch miſtake."

"I will not, madam, fatigue you," he returned, "by tracing the progreſs of my unfortunate admiration; I will endeavour to be more brief, for I ſee you are already wearied." He ſtopt a moment, hoping for ſome little encouragement; but Cecilia, in no humour to give it, aſſumed an air of unconcern, and ſat wholly quiet.

"I knew not," he then went on, with a look of extreme mortification, "the warmth with which I honoured your virtues, till you deigned to plead to me for Mr. Belfield—but let me not recollect the feelings of that moment!—yet were they nothing,—cold, languid, lifeleſs to what I afterwards experienced, when you undeceived me finally with reſpect to your ſituation, and informed me the report concerning Sir Robert Floyer was equally *erroneous* with that which concerned Belfield! O what was the agitation of my whole ſoul at that inſtant!—to know you diſengaged,—to ſee you before me,—by the diſorder of my whole frame to diſcover the miſtake I had cheriſhed—”

Cecilia then, half riſing, yet again ſeating herſelf, looked extremely impatient to be gone.

“Pardon me, madam,” he cried; “I will have done, and trace my feelings and my ſufferings no longer, but haſten, for my own ſake as well as yours, to the reaſon why I have ſpoken at all. From the hour that my ill-deſtined paſſion was fully known to myſelf, I weighed all the conſequences of indulging it, and found, added to the extreme hazard of ſucceſs, an impropriety even in the attempt. *My* honour in the honour of my family is bound! what to that would ſeem wrong, in me would be unjuſtifiable: yet where inducements ſo numerous were oppoſed by one ſingle objection!—where virtue, beauty, education, and family were all unexceptionable,—O cruel clauſe! barbarous and repulſive clauſe! that forbids my aſpiring to the firſt of women, but by an action that with my own family would degrade me for ever!”

He ſtopt, overpowered by his own emotion, and Cecilia aroſe. “I ſee, madam,” he cried, “your eagerneſs to be gone; and however at this moment I may lament it, I *ſhall* recollect it hereafter with advantage.

But to conclude: I determined to avoid you, and, by avoiding, to endeavour to forget you: I determined, alſo, that no human being, and yourſelf leaſt of all, ſhould know, ſhould even ſuſpect the ſituation of my mind: and tho' upon various occaſions, my prudence and forbearance have ſuddenly yielded to ſurpriſe and to paſſion, the ſurrender has been ſhort, and almoſt, I believe, unnoticed.

"This ſilence and this avoidance I ſuſtained with decent conſtancy, till, during the ſtorm, in an ill-fated moment, I ſaw, or thought I ſaw you in ſome danger, and then, all caution off guard, all reſolution ſurpriſed, every paſſion awake, and tenderneſs triumphant——

"Why, Sir," cried Cecilia, angrily, "and for what purpoſe all this?"

"Alas, I know not!" ſaid he, with a deep ſigh: "I thought myſelf better qualified for this conference, and meant to be firm and conciſe. I have told my ſtory ill, but as your own underſtanding will point out the cauſe, your own benevolence will perhaps urge ſome excuſe.

"Too certain, ſince that unfortunate accident, that all diſguiſe was vain, and convinced by your diſpleaſure of the impropriety of which I had been guilty, I determined, as the only apology I could offer, to open to you my whole heart, and then fly you perhaps for ever.

"This, madam, incoherently indeed, yet with ſincerity, I have now done; my ſufferings and my conflicts I do not mention, for I dare not! O were I to paint to you the bitter ſtruggles of a mind all at war with itſelf,—Duty, ſpirit, and fortitude, combating love, happineſs, and inclination,—each conquering alternately and alternately each vanquiſhed,—I could endure it no longer, I reſolved by one effort to finiſh the ſtrife, and to undergo an inſtant of even exquiſite torture, in preference to a continuance of ſuch lingering miſery!"

"The reſtoration of your health, Sir, and ſince you fancy it has been injured, of your happineſs," ſaid Cecilia, "will, I hope, be as ſpeedy, as I doubt not they are certain."

"*Since I fancy it has been injured!*" repeated he; "what a phraſe, after an avowal ſuch as mine! But why ſhould I wiſh to convince you of my ſincerity, when to you it cannot be more indifferent, than to myſelf it is unfortunate! I have now only to entreat your pardon for the robbery I have committed upon your time, and to repeat my acknowledgments that you have endeavoured to hear me with patience."

"If you honour me, Sir, with ſome portion of your eſteem," ſaid the offended Cecilia, "theſe acknowledgments, perhaps, ſhould be mine; ſuppoſe them, however made, for I have a letter to write, and can therefore ſtay no longer."

"Nor do I preſume, madam," cried he, proudly, "to detain you: hitherto you may frequently have thought me myſterious, ſometimes ſtrange and capricious, and perhaps almoſt always unmeaning; to clear myſelf from theſe imputations, by a candid confeſſion of the motives which have governed me, is all that I wiſhed. Once, alſo—I hope but once, you thought me impertinent,—there, indeed, I leſs dare vindicate myſelf—"

"There is no occaſion, Sir," interrupted ſhe, walking towards the door, "for farther vindication in any thing; I am perfectly ſatisfied, and if my good wiſhes are worth your acceptance, aſſure yourſelf you poſſeſs them."

"Barbarous and inſulting!" cried he, half to himſelf; and then, with a quick motion haſtening to open the door for her, "Go, madam," he added, almoſt breathleſs with conflicting emotions, "go, and be your happineſs unalterable as your inflexibility!"

Cecilia was turning back to anſwer this reproach, but the ſight of Lady Honoria, who was entering at the other door, deterred her, and ſhe went on.

When ſhe came to her own room, ſhe walked about it ſome time in a ſtate ſo unſettled, between anger and diſappointment, ſorrow and pride, that ſhe ſcarce knew to which emotion to give way, and felt almoſt burſting with each.

"The dye," ſhe cried, "is at laſt thrown; and this affair is concluded for ever: Delvile himſelf is content to relinquiſh me, no father has commanded, no mother has interfered, he has required no admonition, full well enabled to act for himſelf by the powerful inſtigation of hereditary arrogance! Yet my family, he ſays,—unexpected condeſcenſion! my family and every other circumſtance is unexceptionable; how feeble, then, is that regard which yields to one only objection! how potent that haughtineſs which to nothing will give way! Well, let him keep his name! ſince ſo wonderous its properties, ſo all-ſufficient its preſervation! what vanity, what preſumption in me, to ſuppoſe myſelf an equivalent for its loſs!"

Thus, deeply offended, her ſpirits were ſupported by reſentment, and not only while in company, but when alone, ſhe found herſelf ſcarce averſe to the approaching ſeparation, and enabled to endure it without repining.

CHAP. VIII.

A RETREAT.

THE next morning Cecilia aroſe late, not only to avoid the raillery of Lady Honoria, but to eſcape ſeeing the departure of Delvile; ſhe knew that the ſpirit with which ſhe had left him, made him, at preſent, think her wholly inſenſible, and ſhe was at leaſt happy to be ſpared the mortification of a diſcovery, ſince ſhe found him thus content, without even ſolicitation, to reſign her!

Before ſhe was dreſſed, Lady Honoria ran into her room, "A new ſcheme of politics!" ſhe cried; "our great ſtateſman intends to leave us: he can't truſt his baby out of his ſight, ſo he is going to nurſe him while upon the road himſelf. Poor pretty dear Mortimer! what a puppet do they make of him! I have a vaſt inclination to get a pap-boat myſelf, and make him a preſent of it."

Cecilia then enquired farther particulars, and heard that Mr. Delvile purpoſed accompanying his ſon to Briſtol, whoſe journey, therefore, was poſtponed for a few hours to give time for new preparations.

Mr. Delvile, who, upon this occaſion

thought himſelf overwhelmed with buſineſs; becauſe, before his departure, he had ſome directions to give to his domeſticks, choſe to breakfaſt in his own apartment. Mrs. Delvile, alſo wiſhing for ſome private converſation with her ſon, invited him to partake of her's in her dreſſing-room, ſending an apology to her gueſts, and begging they would order their breakfaſts when they pleaſed.

Mr. Delvile, ſcrupulous in ceremony, had made ſundry apologies to Lord Ernolf for leaving him; but his real anxiety for his ſon overpowering his artificial character, the excuſes he gave to that nobleman were ſuch as could not poſſibly offend; and the views of his lordſhip himſelf in his viſit, being nothing interrupted, ſo long as Cecilia continued at the caſtle, he readily engaged, as a proof that he was not affronted, to remain with Mrs. Delvile till his return.

Cecilia, therefore, had her breakfaſt with the two lords and Lady Honoria; and when it was over, Lord Ernolf propoſed to his ſon riding the firſt ſtage with the two Mr. Delviles on horſeback. This was agreed upon, and they left the room; and then Lady Honoria, full of frolic and gaiety, ſeized one of the napkins, and proteſted ſhe would ſend it to Mortimer for a *ſlabbering-bib*: ſhe therefore made it up in a parcel, and wrote upon the inſide of the paper with which ſhe enveloped it, "A *pin-a-fore* for Maſter Mortimer Delvile, leſt he ſhould daub his pappy when he is feeding him." Eager to have this properly conveyed, ſhe then ran out to give it in charge to her own man, who was to preſent him with it as he got into the chaiſe.

She had but juſt quitted the room, when the door of it was again opened, and by Mortimer himſelf, booted, and equipped for his journey.

"Miſs Beverley here! and alone!" cried he, with a look, and in a voice, which ſhewed that all the pride of the preceding evening was ſunk into the deepeſt dejection; "and does ſhe not fly as I approach her; can ſhe patiently bear in her ſight one ſo ſtrange, ſo fiery, ſo inconſiſtent? But ſhe is too wiſe to reſent the ravings of a madman?—and who, under the influence of a paſſion at once hopeleſs and violent, can boaſt, but at intervals, full poſſeſſion of his reaſon?"

Cecilia, utterly aſtoniſhed by a gentleneſs ſo humble, looked at him in ſilent ſurpriſe; he advanced to her mournfully, and added, "I am aſhamed, indeed, of the bitterneſs of ſpirit with which I laſt night provoked your diſpleaſure, when I ſhould have ſupplicated your lenity: but though I was prepared for your coldneſs, I could not endure it, and though your indifference was almoſt friendly, it made me little leſs than frantic; ſo ſtrangely may juſtice be blinded by paſſion, and every faculty of reaſon be warped by ſelfiſhneſs!"

"You have no apology to make, Sir," cried Cecilia, "ſince, believe me, I require none."

"You may well," returned he, half-ſmiling, "diſpenſe with my apologies, ſince under the ſanction of that word, I obtained your hearing yeſterday. But, believe me, you will now find me far more reaſonable; a whole night's reflections—reflections which no repoſe interrupted!—have brought me to my ſenſes. Even lunatics, you know, have lucid moments!"

"Do you intend, Sir, to ſet off ſoon?"

"I believe ſo; I wait only for my father. But why is Miſs Beverley ſo impatient? I ſhall not ſoon *return*; that, at leaſt, is certain, and, for a few inſtants delay, may ſurely offer ſome palliation:—See! if I am not ready to again accuſe you of ſeverity!—I muſt run, I find, or all my boaſted reformation will end but in freſh offence, freſh diſgrace, and freſh contrition! Adieu, madam!—and may all proſperity attend you! That will ever be my darling wiſh, however long my abſence, however diſtant the climates which may part us!"

He was then hurrying away, but Cecilia, from an impulſe of ſurpriſe too ſudden to be reſtrained, exclaimed, "The climates?—do *you*, then, mean to leave England?"

"Yes," cried he, with quickneſs, "for

why ſhould I remain in it? a few weeks only could I fill up in any tour ſo near home, and hither in a few weeks to return, would be folly and madneſs: in an abſence ſo brief, what thought but that of the approaching meeting would occupy me? and what, at that meeting, ſhould I feel, but joy the moſt dangerous, and delight which I dare not think of!—every conflict renewed, every ſtruggle re-felt, again all this ſcene would require to be acted, again I muſt tear myſelf away, and every tumultuous paſſion now beating in my heart would be revived, and, if poſſible, be revived with added miſery!—No!—neither my temper nor my conſtitution will endure ſuch another ſhock, one parting ſhall ſuffice, and the fortitude with which I will lengthen my ſelf-exile, ſhall atone to myſelf for the weakneſs which makes it requiſite!"

And then, with a vehemence that ſeemed fearful of the ſmalleſt delay, he was again, and yet more haſtily going, when Cecilia, with much emotion, called out, "Two moments, Sir!"

"Two thouſand, two million!" cried he, impetuouſly, and returning, with a look of the moſt earneſt ſurpriſe, he added, "What is it Miſs Beverley will condeſcend to command?"

"Nothing," cried ſhe, recovering her preſence of mind, "but to beg you will by no means, upon my account, quit your country and your friends, ſince another aſylum can be found for myſelf, and ſince I would much ſooner part from Mrs. Delvile, greatly and ſincerely as I reverence her, than be inſtrumental to robbing her, even for a month, of her ſon."

"Generous and humane is the conſideration," cried he; "but who half ſo generous, ſo humane as Miſs Beverley? ſo ſoft to all others, ſo noble in herſelf? Can my mother have a wiſh, when I leave her with you? No; ſhe is ſenſible of your worth, ſhe adores you, almoſt as I adore you myſelf! you are now under her protection, you ſeem, indeed, born for each other; let me not, then, deprive her of ſo honourable a charge.—Oh, why muſt he, who ſees in ſuch colours the excellencies of both, who admires with ſuch fervour the perfections you unite, be torn with this violence from the objects he reveres, even though half his life he would ſacrifice, to ſpend in their ſociety what remained!"

"Well, then, Sir," ſaid Cecilia, who now felt her courage decline, and the ſoftneſs of ſorrow ſteal faſt upon her ſpirits, "if you will not give up your ſcheme, let me no longer detain you."

"Will you not wiſh me a good journey?"

"Yes,—very ſincerely."

"And will you pardon the unguarded errors which have offended you?"

"I will think of them, Sir, no more."

"Farewel, then, moſt amiable of women, and may every bleſſing you deſerve light on your head! I leave to you my mother, certain of your ſympathetic affection for a character ſo reſembling your own. When *you*, madam, leave her, may the happy ſucceſſor in your favour ——" He pauſed, his voice faultered, Cecilia, too, turned away from him, and uttering a deep ſigh, he caught her hand, and preſſing it to his lips, exclaimed, "O great be your felicity, in whatever way you receive it!—pure as your virtues, and warm as your benevolence!—Oh too lovely Miſs Beverley!—why, why muſt I quit you!"

Cecilia, though ſhe truſted not her voice to reprove him, forced away her hand, and then, in the utmoſt perturbation, he ruſhed out of the room.

This ſcene, for Cecilia, was the moſt unfortunate that could have happened; the gentleneſs of Delvile was alone ſufficient to melt her, ſince her pride had no ſubſiſtence when not fed by his own; and while his mildneſs had blunted her diſpleaſure, his anguiſh had penetrated her heart. Loſt in thought and in ſadneſs, ſhe continued fixed to her ſeat; and looking at the door through which he had paſſed, as if, with himſelf, he had ſhut out all for which ſhe exiſted.

This penſive dejection was not long uninterrupted; Lady Honoria came running back, with intelligence, in what manner ſhe had diſpoſed of her napkin, and Cecilia in liſtening, endeavoured to find ſome diverſion; but her ladyſhip, though volatile not undiſcerning, ſoon perceived that her attention was conſtrained, and looking at her with much archneſs, ſaid, "I believe, my dear, I muſt find another napkin for *you!* not, however, for your *mouth*, but for your *eyes!* Has Mortimer been in to take leave of you?"

"Take leave of me?——No,—is he gone?"

"O no, Pappy has a world of buſineſs to ſettle firſt; he won't be ready theſe two hours. But don't look ſo ſorrowful, for I'll run and bring Mortimer to conſole you."

Away ſhe flew, and Cecilia, who had no power to prevent her, finding her ſpirits unequal either to another parting, or to the raillery of Lady Honoria, ſhould Mortimer, for his own ſake, avoid it, took refuge in flight; and ſeizing an umbrella, eſcaped into the park; where, to perplex any purſuers, inſtead of chuſing her uſual walk, ſhe directed her ſteps to a thick and unfrequented wood, and never reſted till ſhe was more than two miles from the houſe. Fidel, however, who now always accompanied her, ran by her ſide, and, when ſhe thought herſelf ſufficiently diſtant and private to be ſafe, ſhe ſat down under a tree, and careſſing her faithful favourite, ſoothed her own tenderneſs by lamenting that *he* had loſt his maſter; and, having now no part to act, and no dignity to ſupport, no obſervation to fear, and no inference to guard againſt, ſhe gave vent to her long ſmothered emotions, by weeping without caution or reſtraint.

She had met with an object whoſe character anſwered all her wiſhes for him with whom ſhe ſhould entruſt her fortune, and whoſe turn of mind, ſo ſimilar to her own, promiſed her the higheſt domeſtic felicity: to this object her affections had involuntarily bent, they were ſeconded by eſteem, and unchecked by any ſuſpicion of impropriety in her choice; ſhe had found too, in return, that his heart was all her own: her birth, indeed, was inferior, but it was not diſgraceful; her diſpoſition, education, and temper ſeemed equal to his fondeſt wiſhes: yet, at the very time when their union appeared moſt likely, when they mixed with the ſame ſociety, and dwelt under the ſame roof, when the father to one, was the guardian to the other, and intereſt ſeemed to invite their alliance even more than affection, the young man himſelf, without counſel or command, could tear himſelf from her preſence by an effort all his own, forbear to ſeek her heart, and almoſt charge her not to grant it, and determining upon voluntary exile, quit his country and his connections with no view, and for no reaſon, but merely that he might avoid the ſight of her he loved!

Though the motive for this conduct was now no longer unknown to her, ſhe neither thought it ſatisfactory nor neceſſary; yet, while ſhe cenſured his flight, ſhe bewailed his loſs, and though his inducement was repugnant to her opinion, his command over his paſſions ſhe admired and applauded.

CHAP. IX.

A WORRY.

CECILIA continued in this private ſpot, happy at leaſt to be alone, till ſhe was ſummoned by the dinner bell to return home.

As ſoon as ſhe entered the parlour, where every body was aſſembled before her, ſhe obſerved, by the countenance of Mrs. Delvile, that ſhe had paſſed the morning as ſadly as herſelf.

"Miſs Beverley," cried Lady Honoria, before ſhe was ſeated, "I inſiſt upon your taking my place to-day."

"Why ſo, madam?"

"Becauſe I cannot ſuffer you to ſit by a window with ſuch a terrible cold."

"Your ladyſhip is very good, but indeed I have not any cold at all."

"O my dear, I muſt beg your pardon there; your eyes are quite blood-ſhot; Mrs. Delvile, Lord Ernolf, are not her eyes quite red?—Lord, and ſo I proteſt are her cheeks! now do pray look in the glaſs; I aſſure you you will hardly know yourſelf."

Mrs. Delvile, who regarded her with the utmoſt kindneſs, affected to underſtand Lady Honoria's ſpeech literally, both to leſſen her apparent confuſion, and the ſuſpicious ſurmiſes of Lord Ernolf; ſhe therefore ſaid, "you have indeed a bad cold, my love; but ſhade your eyes with your hat, and after dinner you ſhall bathe them in roſe water, which will ſoon take off the inflammation."

Cecilia, perceiving her intention, for which ſhe felt the utmoſt gratitude, no longer denied her cold, nor refuſed the offer of Lady Honoria; who, delighting in miſchief, whenceſoever it proceeded, preſently added, "This cold is a judgment upon you for leaving me alone all this morning; but I ſuppoſe you choſe a tête à tête with your favourite, without the intruſion of any third perſon."

Here every body ſtared, and Cecilia very ſeriouſly declared ſhe had been quite alone.

"Is it poſſible you can ſo forget yourſelf?" cried Lady Honoria; "had you not your dearly beloved with you?"

Cecilia, who now comprehended that ſhe meant Fidel, coloured more deeply than ever; but attempted to laugh, and began eating her dinner.

"Here ſeems ſome matter of much intricacy," cried Lord Ernolf, "but, to me, wholly unintelligible."

"And to me alſo," cried Mrs. Delvile; "but I am content to let it remain ſo; for the myſteries of Lady Honoria are ſo frequent, that they deaden curioſity."

"Dear madam, that is very unnatural," cried Lady Honoria, "for I am ſure you muſt long to know who I mean."

"*I* do, at leaſt," ſaid Lord Ernolf.

"Why then, my lord, you muſt know, Miſs Beverley has two companions, and I am one, and Fidel is the other; but Fidel was with her all this morning, and ſhe would not admit me to the conference. I ſuppoſe ſhe had ſomething private to ſay to him of his maſter's journey."

"What rattle is this?" cried Mrs. Delvile; "Fidel is gone with my ſon, is he not?" turning to the ſervants.

"No, madam, Mr. Mortimer did not enquire for him."

"That's very ſtrange," ſaid ſhe; "I never knew him quit home without him before."

"Dear ma'am, if he had taken him," cried *Lady Honoria*, "what could poor Miſs Beverley have done? for ſhe has no friend here but him and me, and really he's ſo much the greater favourite, that it is well if I do not poiſon him ſome day for very ſpite."

Cecilia had no reſource but in forcing a laugh; and Mrs. Delvile, who evidently felt for her, contrived ſoon to change the ſubject: yet not before Lord Ernolf, with infinite chagrin, was certain by all that paſſed of the deſperate ſtate of affairs for his ſon.

The reſt of the day, and every hour of the two days following, Cecilia paſſed in the moſt comfortleſs conſtraint, fearful of being a moment alone, leſt the heavineſs of her heart ſhould ſeek relief in tears, which conſolation, melancholy as it was, ſhe found too dangerous for indulgence: yet the gaiety of Lady Honoria loſt all power of entertainment, and even the kindneſs of Mrs. Delvile, now ſhe imputed it to compaſſion, gave her more mortification than pleaſure.

On the third day letters arrived from Briſtol: but they brought with them nothing of comfort, for though Mortimer wrote gaily, his father ſent word that his fever ſeemed threatening to return.

Mrs. Delvile was now in the extremeſt anxiety; and the taſk of Cecilia in appearing chearful and unconcerned, became more and more difficult to perform. Lord Ernolf's efforts to oblige her grew as hopeleſs to himſelf, as they were irkſome to her; and Lady

Honoria alone, of the whole houſe, could either find or make the ſmalleſt diverſion. But while Lord Derford remained, ſhe had ſtill an object for ridicule, and while Cecilia could colour and be confuſed, ſhe had ſtill a ſubject for miſchief.

Thus paſſed a week, during which the news from Briſtol being every day leſs and leſs pleaſant, Mrs. Delvile ſhewed an earneſt deſire to make a journey thither herſelf, and propoſed, half laughing and half ſeriouſly, that the whole party ſhould accompany her.

Lady Honoria's time, however, was already expired, and her father intended to ſend for her in a few days.

Mrs. Delvile, who knew that ſuch a charge would occupy all her time, willingly deferred ſetting out till her ladyſhip ſhould be gone, but wrote word to Briſtol that ſhe ſhould ſhortly be there, attended by the two lords, who inſiſted upon eſcorting her.

Cecilia was now in a ſtate of the utmoſt diſtreſs; her ſtay at the caſtle ſhe knew kept Delvile at a diſtance; to accompany his mother to Briſtol, was forcing herſelf into his ſight, which equally from prudence and pride ſhe wiſhed to avoid; and even Mrs. Delvile evidently deſired her abſence, ſince whenever the journey was talked of, ſhe preferably addreſſed herſelf to any one elſe who was preſent.

All ſhe could deviſe to relieve herſelf from a ſituation ſo painful, was begging permiſſion to make a viſit without delay to her old friend Mrs. Charlton, in Suffolk.

This reſolution taken, ſhe put it into immediate execution, and ſeeking Mrs. Delvile, enquired if ſhe might venture to make a petition to her?

"Undoubtedly," anſwered ſhe; "but let it not be very diſagreeable, ſince I feel already that I can refuſe you nothing."

"I have an old friend, ma'am," ſhe then cried, ſpeaking faſt, and in much haſte to have done, "who I have not for many months ſeen, and, as *my* health does not require a Briſtol journey,—if you would honour me with mentioning my requeſt to Mr. Delvile, I think I might take the preſent opportunity of making Mrs. Charlton a viſit."

Mrs. Delvile looked at her ſome time without ſpeaking, and then, fervently embracing her, "ſweet Cecilia!" ſhe cried, "yes, you are all that I thought you! good, wiſe, diſcreet, tender, and noble at once!—how to part with you, indeed, I know not,—but you ſhall do as you pleaſe, for that I am ſure will be right, and therefore I will make no oppoſition."

Cecilia bluſhed and thanked her, yet ſaw but too plainly that all the motives of her ſcheme were clearly comprehended. She haſtened, therefore, to write to Mrs. Charlton, and prepare her for her reception.

Mr. Delvile, though with his uſual formality, ſent his permiſſion: and Mortimer, at the ſame time, begged his mother would bring Fidel with her, whom he had unluckily forgotten.

Lady Honoria, who was preſent when Mrs. Delvile mentioned this commiſſion, ſaid in a whiſper to Cecilia, "Miſs Beverley, don't let him go."

"Why not?"

"O, you had a great deal better take him ſlily into Suffolk."

"I would as ſoon," anſwered Cecilia, "take with me the ſide-board of plate, for I ſhould ſcarcely think it more a robbery."

"O, I beg your pardon, I am ſure they might all take ſuch a theft for an honour; and if I was going to Briſtol, I would bid Mortimer ſend him to you immediately. However, if you wiſh it, I will write to him. He's my couſin, you know, ſo there will be no great impropriety in it."

Cecilia thanked her for ſo courteous an offer, but entreated that ſhe might by no means draw her into ſuch a condeſcenſion.

She then made immediate preparations for her journey into Suffolk, which ſhe ſaw gave equal ſurpriſe and chagrin to Lord Ernolf, upon whoſe affairs Mrs. Delvile herſelf now deſired to ſpeak with her.

"Tell me, Miſs Beverley," ſhe cried,

" briefly and positively your opinion of Lord Derford?"

" I think of him ſo little, madam," ſhe anſwered, " that I cannot ſay of him much; he appears, however, to be inoffenſive; but, indeed, were I never to ſee him again, he is one of thoſe I ſhould forget I had ever ſeen at all."

" That is ſo exactly the caſe with myſelf, alſo," cried Mrs. Delvile, " that to plead for him, I find utterly impoſſible, though my Lord Ernolf has ſtrongly requeſted me: but to preſs ſuch an alliance, I ſhould think an indignity to your underſtanding."

Cecilia was much gratified by this ſpeech; but ſhe ſoon after added, " There is one reaſon, indeed, which would render ſuch a connection deſirable, though that is only one."

" What is it, madam?"

" His title."

" And why ſo? I am ſure I have no ambition of that ſort."

" No, my love," ſaid Mrs. Delvile, ſmiling, " I mean not by way of gratification to *your* title, but to *his*; ſince a title, by taking plac[illegible] a family name, would obviate the *only* objection that *any* man could form to an alliance with Miſs Beverley."

Cecilia, who too well underſtood her, ſuppreſſed a ſigh, and changed the ſubject of converſation.

One day was ſufficient for all the preparations ſhe required, and as ſhe meant to ſet out very early the next morning, ſhe took leave of Lady Honoria, and the Lords Ernolf and Derford, when they ſeparated for the night; but Mrs. Delvile followed her to her room.

She expreſſed her concern at loſing her in the warmeſt and moſt flattering terms, yet ſaid nothing of her coming back, nor of the length of her ſtay; ſhe deſired, however, to hear from her frequently, and aſſured her, that out of her own immediate family, there was nobody in the world ſhe ſo tenderly valued.

She continued with her till it grew ſo late that they were almoſt neceſſarily parted: and then riſing, to be gone, "See," ſhe cried, "with what reluctance I quit you! no intereſt but ſo dear a one as that which calls me away, ſhould induce me, with my own conſent, to bear your abſence ſcarcely an hour: but the world is full of mortifications, and to endure, or to ſink under them, makes all the diſtinction between the noble or the weak-minded. To *you* this may be ſaid with ſafety; to moſt young women it would paſs for a reflection."

"You are very good," ſaid Cecilia, ſmothering the emotions to which this ſpeech gave riſe, "and if indeed you honour me with an opinion ſo flattering, I will endeavour, if it is poſſibly in my power, not to forfeit it."

"Ah, my love!" cried Mrs. Delvile, warmly, "if upon my opinion of *you* alone depended our reſidence with each other, when ſhould we ever part, and how live a moment aſunder? But what title have I to monopolize two ſuch bleſſings? the mother of Mortimer Delvile ſhould at nothing repine; the mother of Cecilia Beverley had alone equal reaſon to be proud."

"You are determined, madam," ſaid Cecilia, forcing a ſmile, "that I *ſhall* be worthy, by giving me the ſweeteſt of motives for deſerving ſuch praiſe." And then, in a faint voice, ſhe deſired her reſpects to Mr. Delvile, and added, "you will find, I hope, every body at Briſtol better than you expect."

"I hope ſo," returned ſhe; "and that you too will find your Mrs. Charlton well, happy, and good as you left her: but ſuffer her not to drive *me* from your remembrance; and never fancy that becauſe ſhe has known you longer, ſhe loves [illegible] more; my acquaintance with you, though ſhort, has been critical, and ſhe muſt hear from you a world of anecdotes before ſhe can have reaſon to love you as much."

"Ah, madam," cried Cecilia, tears ſtarting into her eyes, "let us part now!—

where

where will be that ſtrength of mind you expect from me, if I liſten to you any longer!"

"You are right, my love," anſwered Mrs. Delvile, "ſince all tenderneſs enfeebles fortitude." Then affectionately embracing her, "Adieu," ſhe cried, "ſweeteſt Cecilia, amiable and moſt excellent creature, adieu!—you carry with you my higheſt approbation, my love, my eſteem, my fondeſt wiſhes!—and ſhall I—yes, generous girl! I *will* add, my warmeſt gratitude!"

This laſt word ſhe ſpoke almoſt in a whiſper, again kiſſed her, and haſtened out of the room.

Cecilia, ſurpriſed and affected, gratified and depreſſed, remained almoſt motionleſs, and could not, for a great length of time, either ring for her maid, or perſuade herſelf to go to reſt. She ſaw throughout the whole behaviour of Mrs. Delvile, a warmth of regard which, though ſtrongly oppoſed by family pride, made her almoſt miſerable to promote the very union ſhe thought neceſſary to diſcountenance; ſhe ſaw, too, that it was with the utmoſt difficulty ſhe preſerved the ſteadineſs of her oppoſition, and that [illegible] had a conflict perpetual with herſelf, to forbear openly acknowledging the contrariety of her wiſhes, and the perplexity of her diſtreſs; but chiefly ſhe was ſtruck with her expreſſive uſe of the word gratitude. "Wherefore ſhould ſhe be grateful, thought Cecilia? what have I done, or had power to do? infinitely, indeed, is ſhe deceived, if ſhe ſuppoſes that her ſon has acted by my directions; my influence with him is nothing, and he could not be more his own maſter, were he utterly indifferent to me. To conceal my own diſappointment has been all I have attempted; and perhaps ſhe may think of me thus highly, from ſuppoſing that the firmneſs of her ſon is owing to my caution and reſerve: ah, ſhe knows him not!—were my heart at this moment laid open to him,—were all its weakneſs, its partiality, its ill-fated admiration diſplayed, he would but double his vigilance to avoid and forget me, and find the taſk all the eaſier by his abatement of eſteem. Oh ſtrange infatuation of unconquerable prejudice! his very life will he ſacrifice in preference to his name, and while the conflict of his mind threatens to level him with the duſt, he diſdains to unite himſelf where one wiſh is unſatisfied!"

These reflections, and the uncertainty if ſhe ſhould ever in Delvile caſtle ſleep again, diſturbed her the whole night, and made all calling in the morning unneceſſary. She aroſe at five o'clock, dreſſed herſelf with the utmoſt heavineſs of heart, and in going through a long gallery which led to the ſtair-caſe, as ſhe paſſed the door of Mortimer's chamber, the thought of his ill health, his intended long journey, and the probability that ſhe might never ſee him more, ſo deeply impreſſed and ſaddened her, that ſcarcely could ſhe force herſelf to proceed, without ſtopping to weep and to pray for him; ſhe was ſurrounded, however, by ſervants, and compelled therefore to haſten to the chaiſe; ſhe flung herſelf in, and leaning back, drew her hat over her eyes, and thought, as the carriage drove off, her laſt hope of earthly happineſs extinguiſhed.

CHAP. X.

A RENOVATION.

CECILIA was accompanied by her maid in the chaiſe, and her own ſervant and one of Mrs. Delvile's attended her on horſeback.

The quietneſs of her dejection was ſoon interrupted by a loud cry among the men of "home! home! home!" She then looked out of one of the windows, and perceived Fidel, running after the carriage, and barking at the ſervants, who were all endeavouring to ſend him back.

Touched by this proof of the animal's gratitude for her attention to him, and conſcious ſhe had herſelf occaſioned his maſter's leaving him, the ſcheme of Lady Honoria occurred to her, and ſhe almoſt wiſhed to put it in execution, but this was the thought of a moment, and motioning him with her hand to go back, ſhe deſired Mrs. Delvile's man to return with him immediately, and commit him to the care of ſomebody in the caſtle.

This little incident, however trifling, was the moſt important of her journey, for ſhe arrived at the houſe of Mrs. Charlton without meeting any other.

The ſight of that lady gave her a ſenſation of pleaſure to which ſhe had long been a ſtranger, pleaſure pure, unmixed, unaffected, and unreſtrained: it revived all her early affections, and with it ſomething reſembling at leaſt her early tranquillity: again ſhe was in the houſe where it had once been undiſturbed, again ſhe enjoyed the ſociety which was once all ſhe had wiſhed, and again ſaw the ſame ſcene, the ſame faces, and ſame proſpects ſhe had beheld while her heart was all devoted to her friends.

Mrs. Charlton, though old and infirm, preſerved an underſtanding which, whenever unbiaſſed by her affections, was ſure to direct her unerringly, but the extreme ſoftneſs of her temper frequently miſled her judgment, by making it, at the pleaſure either of misfortune or of artifice, always yield to compaſſion, and pliant to entreaty. Where her counſel and opinion were demanded, they were certain to reflect honour on her capacity and diſcernment; but where her aſſiſtance or her pity were ſupplicated, her purſe and her tears were immediately beſtowed, and in her zeal to alleviate diſtreſs ſhe forgot if the object were deſerving her ſolicitude, and ſtopt not to conſider propriety or diſcretion, if happineſs, however momentary, were in her power to grant.

This generous foible was, however, kept ſomewhat in ſubjection by the watchfulneſs of two grand-daughters, who, fearing the injury they might themſelves receive from it, failed not to point out both its inconvenience and its danger.

Theſe ladies were daughters of a deceaſed and only ſon of Mrs. Charlton; they were ſingle, and lived with their grand-mother, whoſe fortune, which was conſiderable, they expected to ſhare between them, and they waited with eagerneſs for the moment of appropriation: narrow-minded and rapacious, they wiſhed to monopolize whatever ſhe poſſeſſed, and thought themſelves aggrieved by her ſmalleſt donations. Their chief employment was to keep from her all objects of diſtreſs, and in this, though they could not ſucceed, they at leaſt confined her liberality to ſuch as reſembled themſelves, ſince neither the ſpirited could brook, nor the delicate ſupport the checks and rebuffs from the grand-daughters, which followed the gifts of Mrs. Charlton. Cecilia, of all her acquaintance, was the only one whoſe intimacy they encouraged, for they knew her fortune made her ſuperior to any mercenary views, and they received from her themſelves more civilities than they paid.

Mrs. Charlton loved Cecilia with an exceſs of fondneſs, that not only took place of the love ſhe bore her other friends, but to which even her regard for the Miſs Charltons was inferior and feeble. Cecilia when a child had reverenced her as a mother, and, grateful for her tenderneſs and care, had afterwards cheriſhed her as a friend. The revival of this early connection delighted them both; it was balm to the wounded mind of Cecilia, it was renovation to the exiſtence of Mrs. Charlton.

Early the next morning ſhe wrote a card to Mr. Monckton and Lady Margaret, acquainting them with her return into Suffolk, and deſiring to know when ſhe might pay her reſpects to her ladyſhip. She received from the old lady a verbal anſwer, *when ſhe pleaſed*; but Mr. Monckton came inſtantly himſelf to Mrs. Charlton's.

His aſtoniſhment, his rapture, at this unexpected incident, were almoſt boundleſs: he thought it a ſudden turn of fortune in his own favour, and concluded, now she had quitted the danger of Delvile Castle, the road was short and certain that led to his own security.

Her satisfaction in the meeting was apparent, though not so animated as his own; but this similarity in their feelings was of short duration, for when he enquired into what had paſſed at the caſtle, with the reaſons of her quitting it, the pain ſhe felt in giving even a curſory and evaſive account, was oppoſed on his part by the warmeſt delight in hearing it: he could not obtain from her the particulars of what had happened, but the reluctance with which ſhe ſpoke, the air of mortification with which ſhe heard his queſtions, and the evident diſpleaſure which was mingled in her chagrin, when he forced her to mention Delvile, were all proofs the moſt indiſputable and ſatisfactory, that they had either parted without any explanation, or with one by which Cecilia had been hurt and offended.

He now readily concluded, that ſince the fiery trial he had moſt apprehended was over, and ſhe had quitted in anger the aſylum ſhe had ſought in extacy, Delvile himſelf did not covet the alliance, which, ſince they were ſeparated, was never likely to take place. He had therefore little difficulty in promiſing all ſucceſs to himſelf.

She was once more upon the ſpot where ſhe [illegible] as the firſt of [illegible] he knew that during her abſence, no one had ſettled in the neighbourhood who had any pretenſions to diſpute with him that pre-eminence; he ſhould again have acceſs to her at pleaſure; and ſo ſanguine grew his hopes, that he almoſt began to rejoice even in the partiality to Delvile, that had hitherto been his terror, from believing it would give her, for a time, that ſullen diſtaſte to all other connections, to which thoſe who at once are delicate and fervent, are commonly led by early diſappointment. His whole ſolicitude therefore now was to preſerve her eſteem, to ſeek her confidence, and to regain whatever by abſence might be loſt, of the aſcendant over her mind which her reſpect for his knowledge and capacity had for many years given him. Fortune at this time ſeemed to proſper all his views, and, by a ſtroke the moſt ſudden and unexpected, to render more rational his hopes and his plans, than he had himſelf been able to effect by the utmoſt craft of worldly wiſdom.

The day following, Cecilia, in Mrs Charlton's chaiſe, waited upon Lady Margaret. She was received by Miſs Bennet, her companion, with the moſt fawning courteſy; but when conducted to the lady of the houſe, ſhe ſaw herſelf ſo evidently unwelcome, that ſhe even regretted the civility which had prompted her viſit.

She found with her nobody but Mr. Morrice, who was the only young man that could perſuade himſelf to endure her company in the abſence of her huſband, but who, in common with moſt young men who are aſſiduous in their attendance upon old ladies, doubted not but he enſured himſelf a handſome legacy for his trouble.

Almoſt the firſt ſpeech which her ladyſhip made, was, "So you are not married yet, I find; if Mr. Monckton had been a real friend, he would have taken care to have ſeen for ſome eſtabliſhment for you."

"I was by no means," cried Cecilia, with ſpirit, "either in ſo much haſte or diſtreſs as to require from Mr. Monckton any ſuch exertion of his friendſhip."

"Ma'am," cried Morrice, "what a terrible night we had of it at Vauxhall! poor Harrel! I was really exceſſively ſorry for him. I had not courage to ſee you or Mrs. Harrel after it. But as ſoon as I heard you were in St. James's-Square, I tried to wait upon you, for really going to Mr. Harrel's again would have been quite too diſmal. I would rather have run a mile by the ſide of a race-horſe."

"There is no occaſion for any apology," ſaid Cecilia, "for I was very little diſpoſed either to ſee or think of viſitors."

"So I thought, ma'am," anſwered he, with quickneſs, "and really that made me *the leſs* alert in finding you out. However,

ma'am,

houſe next winter, I ſhall be exceſſively happy to make up for the deficiency; beſides, I ſhall be much obliged to you to introduce me to Mr. Delvile, for I have a great deſire to be acquainted with him."

Mr. Delvile, thought Cecilia, would be proud to hear it! However, ſhe merely anſwered that ſhe had no preſent proſpect of ſpending any time at Mr. Delvile's next winter.

"True, ma'am, true," cried he, "now I recollect, you become your own miſtreſs between this and then; and ſo I ſuppoſe you will naturally chuſe a houſe of your own; which will be much more eligible."

"I don't think that," ſaid Lady Margaret; "I never ſaw any thing eligible come of young women's having houſes of their own; ſhe will do a much better thing to marry, and have ſome proper perſon to take care of her."

"Nothing more right, ma'am!" returned he, "a young lady in a houſe by herſelf muſt be ſubject to a thouſand dangers. What ſort of place, ma'am, has Mr. Delvile got in the country? I hear he has a good deal of ground there, and a large houſe."

"It is an old caſtle, Sir, and ſituated in a park."

"That muſt be terribly forlorn; I dare ſay, ma'am, you were very happy to return into Suffolk."

"I did not find it ſo lonely; I was very well ſatisfied with it."

"Why, indeed, upon ſecond thoughts, I don't much wonder; an old caſtle in a large park muſt make a very romantic appearance; ſomething noble in it, I dare ſay."

"Aye," cried Lady Margaret, "they ſaid you were to become miſtreſs of it, and marry Mr. Delvile's ſon: and I cannot, for my own part, ſee any objection to it."

"I am told of ſo many ſtrange reports," ſaid Cecilia, "and all to myſelf ſo unaccountable, that I begin now to hear of them without much wonder."

"That's a charming young man, I believe," ſaid Morrice; "I had the pleaſure once or twice of meeting him at poor Harrel's, and he ſeemed mighty agreeable. Is not he ſo, ma'am?"

"Yes,—I believe ſo."

"Nay, I don't mean to ſpeak of him as any thing very extraordinary," cried Morrice, imagining her heſitation proceeded from diſlike, "I merely meant as the world goes, in a common ſort of way."

Here they were joined by Mr. Monckton and ſome gentlemen who were on a viſit at his houſe; for his anxiety was not of a ſort to lead him to ſolitude, nor his diſpoſition to make him deny himſelf any kind of enjoyment which he had power to attain. A general converſation enſued, which laſted till Cecilia ended her viſit. Mr. Monckton then took her hand to lead her to the chaiſe, but told her, in their way out, of ſome alterations in his grounds, which he deſired to ſhew her: his view of detaining her was to gather what ſhe thought of her reception, and whether ſhe had yet any ſuſpicions of the jealouſy of Lady Margaret; well knowing, from the delicacy of her character, that if once ſhe became acquainted with it, ſhe would ſcrupulouſly avoid all intercourſe with him, from the fear of increaſing her uneaſineſs.

He began, therefore, with talking of the pleaſure which Lady Margaret took in the plantations, and of his hope that Cecilia would often favour her by viſiting them, without waiting to have her viſits returned, as ſhe was entitled by her infirmities to particular indulgencies. He was continuing in this ſtrain, receiving from Cecilia hardly any anſwer, when ſuddenly, from behind a thick laurel buſh, jumpt up Mr. Morrice, who had ran out of the houſe by a ſhorter cut, and planted himſelf there to ſurpriſe them.

"So ho!" cried he, with a loud laugh, "I have caught you! This will be a fine anecdote for Lady Margaret; I vow I'll tell her."

Mr. Monckton, never off his guard, readily anſwered, "Aye, prithee do, Morrice, but don't omit to relate alſo what we ſaid of yourſelf."

"Of me?" cried he, with ſome eagerneſs, "why you never mentioned me."

"O that won't paſs, I aſſure you; we ſhall tell another tale at table by and bye, and bring the old proverb of the ill luck of liſteners upon you in its full force."

"Well, I'll be hanged if I know what you mean!"

"Why you won't pretend you did not hear Miſs Beverley ſay you were the trueſt ourang outang, or man-monkey, ſhe ever knew?"

"No, indeed, that I did not!"

"No?—Nor how much ſhe admired your dexterity in eſcaping being horſe-whipt three times a day for your incurable impudence?"

"Not a word on't! horſe-whipt!—Miſs Beverley, pray did you ſay any ſuch a thing?"

"Ay," cried Monckton again, "and not only horſe-*whipt*, but horſe-*ponded*, for ſhe thought when one had heated, the other might cool you; and then you might be fitted again for your native woods, for ſhe inſiſts upon it you were brought from Africa, and are not yet half tamed."

"O lord!" cried Morrice, amazed, "I ſhould not have ſuſpected Miſs Beverley would have talked ſo!"

"And do you ſuſpect ſhe did now?" cried Cecilia.

"Pho, pho," cried Monckton, coolly,

why he heard it himſelf the whole time! and ſo ſhall all our party by and bye, if I can but remember to mention it."

Cecilia then returned to the chaiſe, leaving Mr. Monckton to ſettle the matter with his credulous gueſt as he pleaſed; for ſuppoſing he was merely gratifying a love of ſport, or taking this method of checking the general forwardneſs of the young man, ſhe forbore any interference that might mar his intention.

But Mr. Monckton loved not to be rallied concerning Cecilia, though he was indifferent to all that could be ſaid to him of any other woman; he meant, therefore, to intimidate Morrice from renewing the ſubject; and he ſucceeded to his wiſh; poor Morrice, whoſe watching and whoſe ſpeech were the mere blunders of chance, made without the ſlighteſt ſuſpicion of Mr. Monckton's deſigns, now apprehended ſome ſcheme to render himſelf ridiculous; and though he did not believe Cecilia had made uſe of ſuch expreſſions, he fancied Mr. Monckton meant to turn the laugh againſt him, and determined, therefore, to ſay nothing that might remind him of what had paſſed.

Mr. Monckton had at this time admitted him at his houſe merely from an expectation of finding more amuſement in his blundering and giddineſs, than he was capable, during his anxiety concerning Cecilia, of receiving from converſation of an higher ſort.

The character of Morrice was, indeed, particularly adapted for the entertainment of a large houſe in the country; eager for ſport, and always ready for enterprize; willing to oblige, yet tormented with no delicacy about offending; the firſt to promote miſchief for any other, and the laſt to be offended when expoſed to it himſelf; gay, thoughtleſs and volatile, a happy compoſition of levity and good humour.

Cecilia, however, in quitting the houſe, determined not to viſit it again very ſpeedily; for ſhe was extremely diſguſted with Lady Margaret, though ſhe ſuſpected no particular motives of enmity, againſt which ſhe was guarded alike by her own unſuſpicious innocence, and by an high eſteem of Mr. Monckton, which ſhe firmly believed he returned with equal honeſty of undeſigning friendſhip.

Her next excurſion was to viſit Mrs. Harrel: ſhe found that unhappy lady a prey to all the miſery of unoccupied ſolitude; torn from whatever had to her made exiſtence ſeem valuable, her mind was as liſtleſs as her perſon was inactive, and ſhe was at a loſs how to employ even a moment of the day: ſhe had now neither a party to form, nor an entertainment to plan, company to arrange, nor dreſs to conſider; and theſe, with viſits and public places, had filled all her time ſince her marriage, which, as it happened very early in her life, had merely taken place of girliſh amuſements, maſters and governeſſes.

This helpleſſneſs of ſtupidity, however, though naturally the effect of a mind devoid of all genuine reſources, was dignified by herſelf with the appellation of ſorrow: nor was this merely a ſcreen to the world; unuſed to inveſtigate her feelings or examine her heart, the general compaſſion ſhe met for the loſs of her huſband, perſuaded her that indeed ſhe lamented his deſtiny; though had no change in her life been cauſed by his ſuicide, ſhe would ſcarcely, when the firſt ſhock was over, have thought of it again.

She received Cecilia with great pleaſure; and with ſtill greater, heard the renewal of her promiſes to fit up a room for her in her houſe, as ſoon as ſhe came of age; a period which now was hardly a month diſtant.

Far greater, however, as well as infinitely purer, was the joy which her preſence beſtowed upon Mr. Arnott; ſhe ſaw it herſelf with a ſenſation of regret, not only at the conſtant paſſion which occaſioned it, but even at her own inability to participate in or reward it: for with him an alliance would meet with no oppoſition; his character was amiable, his ſituation in life unexceptionable; he loved her with the tendereſt affection, and no pride, ſhe well knew, would interfere to overpower it; yet, in return, to grant him her love, ſhe felt as utterly impoſſible as to refuſe him her eſteem: and the ſuperior attractions of Delvile, of which neither diſpleaſure nor mortification could rob him, ſhut up her heart, for the preſent, more firmly than ever, as Mr. Monckton had well imagined, to all other aſſailants.

Yet ſhe by no means weakly gave way to repining or regret: her ſuſpence was at an end, her hopes and her fears were ſubſided into certainty; Delvile, in quitting her, had acquainted her that he left her for ever, and even, though not, indeed, with much ſteadineſs, had prayed for her happineſs in union with ſome other; ſhe held it therefore as eſſential to her character as to her peace, to manifeſt equal fortitude in ſubduing her partiality; ſhe forbore to hint to Mrs. Charlton what had paſſed, that the ſubject might never be ſtarted; allowed herſelf no time for dangerous recollection; ſtrolled in her old walks, and renewed her old acquaintance, and by a vigorous exertion of active wiſdom, doubted not compleating, before long, the ſubjection of her unfortunate tenderneſs. Nor was her taſk ſo difficult as ſhe had feared; reſolution, in ſuch caſes, may act the office of time, and anticipate by reaſon and ſelf-denial, what that, much leſs nobly, effects through forgetfulneſs and inconſtancy.

CHAP.

CHAP. XI.

A VISIT.

ONE week only, however, had yet tried the perſeverance of Cecilia, when, while ſhe was working with Mrs. Charlton in her dreſſing-room, her maid haſtily entered it; and with a ſmile that ſeemed announcing welcome news, ſaid, "Lord, ma'am, here's Fidel!" and, at the ſame moment, ſhe was followed by the dog, who jumpt upon Cecilia in a tranſport of delight.

"Good heaven," cried ſhe, all amazement, "who has brought him? whence does he come?"

"A country man brought him, ma'am; but he only put him in, and would not ſtay a minute."

"But whom did he enquire for?—who ſaw him?—what did he ſay?"

"He ſaw Ralph, ma'am."

Ralph, then, was inſtantly called: and theſe queſtions being repeated, he ſaid, "Ma'am, it was a man I never ſaw before; but he only bid me take care to deliver the dog into your own hands, and ſaid you would have a letter about him ſoon, and then went away. I wanted him to stay till I came up stairs, but he was off at once."

Cecilia, quite confounded by this account, could make neither comment nor anſwer; but, as ſoon as the ſervants had left the room, Mrs. Charlton entreated to know to whom the dog had belonged, convinced by her extreme agitation, that ſomething intereſting and uncommon muſt relate to him.

This was no time for diſguiſe; aſtoniſhment and confuſion bereft Cecilia of all power to attempt it: and, after a very few evaſions, ſhe briefly communicated her ſituation with reſpect to Delvile, his leaving her, his motives, and his mother's evident concurrence; for theſe were all ſo connected with her knowledge of Fidel, that ſhe led to them unavoidably in telling what ſhe knew of him.

Very little penetration was requiſite, to gather from her manner all that was omitted in her narrative, of her own feelings and diſappointment in the courſe of this affair: and Mrs. Charlton, who had hitherto believed the whole world at her diſpoſal, and that ſhe continued ſingle from no reaſon but her own difficulty of choice, was utterly amazed to find that any man exiſted, who could withſtand the united allurements of ſo much beauty, ſweetneſs, and fortune. She felt herſelf ſometimes inclined to hate, and at other times to pity him; yet concluded that her own extreme coldneſs was the real cauſe of his flight, and warmly blamed a reſerve which had thus ruined her happineſs.

Cecilia was in the extremeſt perplexity and diſtreſs to conjecture the meaning of ſo unaccountable a preſent, and ſo ſtrange a meſſage. Delvile, ſhe knew, had deſired the dog might follow him to Briſtol: his mother, always pleaſed to oblige him, would now leſs than ever neglect any opportunity: ſhe could not, therefore, doubt that ſhe had ſent or taken him thither, and thence, according to all appearances, he muſt now come. But was it likely Delvile would take ſuch a liberty? Was it probable, when ſo lately he had almoſt exhorted her to forget him, he would even wiſh to preſent her with ſuch a remembrance of himſelf? And what was the letter ſhe was bid to expect? Whence and from whom was it to come?

All was inexplicable! the only thing ſhe could ſurmiſe, with any ſemblance of probability, was, that the whole was ſome frolic of Lady Honoria Pemberton, who had perſuaded Delvile to ſend her the dog, and perhaps aſſured him ſhe had herſelf requeſted to have him.

Provoked by this ſuggeſtion, her firſt thought was inſtantly having him conveyed to the caſtle; but uncertain what the whole affair meant, and hoping ſome explanation in the letter ſhe was promiſed, ſhe determined to wait till it came, or at leaſt till ſhe heard from Mrs. Delvile, before ſhe took any meaſures herſelf in the buſineſs. Mutual accounts of their ſafe arrivals at Briſtol and in Suffolk, had already paſſed between them, and ſhe expected very ſoon to have farther intelligence: though ſhe was now, by the whole behaviour of Mrs. Delvile, convinced ſhe wiſhed not again to have her an inmate of her houſe, and that the reſt of her minority might paſs, without oppoſition, in the houſe of Mrs. Charlton.

Day after day, however, paſſed, and yet ſhe heard nothing more; a week, a fortnight elapſed, and ſtill no letter came. She now concluded the promiſe was a deception and repented that ſhe had waited a moment with any ſuch expectation. Her peace, during this time, was greatly diſturbed; this preſent made her fear ſhe was thought meanly of by Mr. Delvile; the ſilence of his mother gave her apprehenſions for his health, and her own irreſolution how to act, kept her in perpetual inquietude. She tried in vain to behave as if this incident had not happened; her mind was uneaſy, and the ſame actions produced not the ſame effects; when ſhe now worked or read, the ſight of Fidel by her ſide diſtracted her attention; when ſhe walked, it was the ſame, for Fidel always followed her; and though, in viſiting her old acquaintance, ſhe forbore to let him accompany her, ſhe was ſecretly planning the whole time the contents of ſome letter, which ſhe expected to meet with, on returning to Mrs. Charlton's.

Thoſe gentlemen in the country who, during the life-time of the Dean, had paid their addreſſes to Cecilia, again waited upon her at Mrs. Charlton's, and renewed their propoſals. They had now, however, ſtill leſs chance of ſucceſs, and their diſmiſſion was brief and deciſive.

Among theſe came Mr. Biddulph; and to him Cecilia was involuntarily moſt civil, becauſe ſhe knew him to be the friend of Delvile. Yet his converſation encreaſed the uneaſineſs of her ſuſpence; for after ſpeaking of the family in general which ſhe had left, he enquired more particularly concerning Delvile, and then added, "I am indeed, greatly grieved to find, by all the accounts I receive of him, that he is now in a very bad ſtate of health."

This ſpeech gave her freſh ſubject for apprehenſion; and in proportion as the ſilence of Mrs. Delvile grew more alarming, her regard for her favourite Fidel became more partial. The affectionate animal ſeemed to mourn the loſs of his maſter, and while ſometimes ſhe indulged herſelf in fancifully telling him her fears, ſhe imagined ſhe read in his countenance the faithfulleſt ſympathy.

One week of her minority was now all that remained, and ſhe was ſoon wholly occupied in preparations for coming of age. She pur-

poſed

poſed taking poſſeſſion of a large houſe that had belonged to her uncle, which was ſituated only three miles from that of Mrs. Charlton; and ſhe employed herſelf in giving orders for fitting it up, and in hearing complaints, and promiſing indulgencies, to various of her tenants.

At this time, while ſhe was at breakfaſt one morning, a letter arrived from Mrs. Delvile. She apologiſed for not writing ſooner, but added, that various family occurrences, which had robbed her of all leiſure, might eaſily be imagined, when ſhe acquainted her that Mortimer had determined upon again going abroad. . . . . . . They were all, ſhe ſaid, returned to Delvile Caſtle, but mentioned nothing either of the health of her ſon, or of her own regret, and filled up the reſt of her letter with general news, and expreſſions of kindneſs: though, in a poſtſcript, was inſerted, "We have loſt our poor Fidel."

Cecilia was ſtill meditating upon this letter, by which her perplexity how to act was rather encreaſed than diminiſhed, when, to her great ſurpriſe, Lady Honoria Pemberton was announced. She haſtily begged one of the Miſs Charltons to convey Fidel out of ſight, from a dread of her raillery, ſhould ſhe, at laſt, be unconcerned in the tranſaction; and then went to receive her.

Lady Honoria, who was with her governeſs, gave a brief hiſtory of her quitting Delvile

Caſtle, and ſaid ſhe was now going with her father to viſit a noble family in Norfolk: but ſhe had obtained his permiſſion to leave him at the inn where they had ſlept, in order to make a ſhort excurſion to Bury, for the pleaſure of ſeeing Miſs Beverley.

"And therefore," ſhe continued, "I can ſtay but half an hour; ſo you muſt give me ſome account of yourſelf as faſt as poſſible."

"What account does your ladyſhip require?"

"Why, who you live with here, and who are your companions, and what you do with yourſelf."

"Why, I live with Mrs. Charlton; and for companions, I have at leaſt a ſcore; here are her two grand-daughters, and Mrs. and Miſs ——"

"Pho, pho," interrupted Lady Honoria, "but I don't mean ſuch hum-drum companions as thoſe; you'll tell me next, I ſuppoſe, of the parſon, and his wife and three daughters, with all their couſins and aunts: I hate thoſe ſort of people. What I deſire to hear of is, who are your particular favourites; and whether you take long walks here, as you uſed to do at the caſtle, and who you have to accompany you?" And then, looking at her very archly, ſhe added, "A pretty little dog, now, I ſhould think, would be vaſtly agreeable in ſuch a place as this.—Ah, Miſs Beverley! you have not left off that trick of colouring, I ſee!"

"If I colour now," ſaid Cecilia, fully convinced of the juſtneſs of her ſuſpicions, "I think it muſt be for your ladyſhip, not myſelf; for, if I am not much miſtaken, either in perſon, or by proxy, a bluſh from Lady Honoria Pemberton would not, juſt now, be wholly out of ſeaſon."

"Lord," cried ſhe, "how like that is to a ſpeech of Mrs. Delvile's! She has taught you exactly her manner of talking. But do you know I am informed you have got Fidel with you here? O fie, Miſs Beverley! What will papa and mamma ſay, when they find you have taken away poor little maſter's play-thing?"

"And O fie, Lady Honoria! what ſhall I ſay, when I find you guilty of this miſchievous frolic! I muſt beg, however, ſince you have gone thus far, that you will proceed a little farther, and ſend back the dog to the perſon from whom you received him."

"No, not I! manage him all your own way: if you chuſe to accept dogs from gentlemen, you know, it is your affair, and not mine."

"If you really will not return him yourſelf, you muſt at leaſt pardon me ſhould you hear that I do in your ladyſhip's name."

Lady Honoria for ſome time only laughed and rallied, without coming to any explanation; but when ſhe had exhauſted all the ſport ſhe could make, ſhe frankly owned that ſhe had herſelf ordered the dog to be privately ſtolen, and then ſent a man with him to Mrs. Charlton's.

"But you know," ſhe continued, "I really owed you a ſpite for being ſo ill-natured as to run away after ſending me to call Mortimer to comfort and take leave of you."

"Do you dream, Lady Honoria? when did I ſend you?"

"Why you know you looked as if you wiſhed it, and that was the ſame thing. But really it made me appear exceſſively ſilly, when I had forced him to come back with me, and told him you were waiting for him,—to ſee nothing of you at all, and not be able to find or trace you. He took it all for my own invention."

"And was it *not* your own invention?"

"Why that's nothing to the purpoſe; I wanted him to believe you ſent me, for I knew elſe he would not come."

"Your ladyſhip was a great deal too good!"

"Why now ſuppoſe I had brought you together, what poſſible harm could have happened from it? It would merely have given each of you ſome notion of a fever and ague; for firſt you would both have been hot, and then you would both have been cold, and then you would both have turned red, and then you would both have turned white, and then you would both have pretended to ſimper at the trick; and then there would have been an end of it."

"This is a very eaſy way of ſettling it all," cried Cecilia, laughing; "however, you muſt be content to abide by your own theft, for you cannot in conſcience expect I ſhould take it upon myſelf."

"You are terribly ungrateful, I ſee," ſaid her ladyſhip, "for all the trouble and contrivance and expence I have been at merely to oblige you, while the whole time poor Mortimer, I dare ſay, has had his ſweet Pet advertiſed in all the news papers, and cried in every market town in the kingdom. By the way, if you do ſend him back, I would adviſe you to let your man demand the reward that has been offered for him, which may ſerve in part of payment for his travelling expences."

Cecilia could only ſhake her head, and recollect Mrs. Delvile's expreſſion, that her levity was incorrigible.

"O if you had ſeen," ſhe continued, "how ſheepiſh Mortimer looked when I told him you were dying to ſee him before he ſet off! he coloured ſo!—juſt as you do now! but I think you're vaſtly alike."

"I fear, then," cried Cecilia, not very angry at this ſpeech, "there is but little chance your ladyſhip ſhould like either of us."

"O yes, I do! I like odd people of all things."

"Odd people? and in what are we ſo very odd?"

"O, in a thouſand things. You're ſo good, you know, and ſo grave, and ſo ſqueamiſh."

"Squeamiſh? how?"

"Why, you know, you never laugh at the old folks, and never fly at your ſervants, nor ſmoke people before their faces, and are ſo civil to all the old *fograms*, you would make one imagine you liked nobody ſo well. By the way, I could do no good with my little Lord Derford; he pretended to find out I was only laughing at him, and ſo he minded nothing I told him. I dare ſay, however, his father made the detection, for I am ſure he had not wit enough to diſcover it himſelf."

Cecilia then very ſeriouſly began to entreat that ſhe would return the dog herſelf, and confeſs her frolic, remonſtrating in ſtrong terms upon the miſchievous tendency and conſequences of ſuch inconſiderate flights.

"Well," cried ſhe, riſing, "this is all vaſtly true; but I have no time to hear any more of it juſt now; beſides, it's only foreſtalling my next lecture from Mrs. Delvile, for you talk ſo much alike, that it is really very perplexing to me to remember which is which.

She then hurried away, proteſting ſhe had already out-ſtayed her father's patience, and declaring the delay of another minute would occaſion half a dozen expreſſes to know whether ſhe was gone towards Scotland or Flanders.

This viſit, however, was both pleaſant and conſolatory to Cecilia; who was now relieved from her ſuſpenſe, and revived in her ſpirits, by the intelligence that Delvile had no ſhare in ſending her a preſent, which, from him, would have been humiliating and impertinent. She regretted, indeed, that ſhe had not inſtantly returned it to the caſtle, which ſhe was now convinced was the meaſure ſhe ought to have purſued; but to make all poſſible reparation, ſhe determined that her own ſervant ſhould ſet out with it the next morning to Briſtol, and take a letter to Mrs. Delvile to explain what had happened, ſince to conceal it from any delicacy to Lady Honoria, would be to expoſe herſelf to ſuſpicions the moſt mortifying, for which that gay and careleſs young lady would never thank her.

She gave orders, therefore, to her ſervant to get ready for the journey.

When ſhe communicated theſe little tranſactions to Mrs. Charlton, that kind-hearted old lady, who knew her fondneſs for Fidel, adviſed her not yet to part with him, but merely to acquaint Mrs. Delvile where he was, and what Lady Honoria had done, and by leaving to herſelf the care of ſettling his reſtoration, to give her at leaſt, an opportunity of offering him to her acceptance.

Cecilia, however, would liſten to no ſuch propoſal; ſhe ſaw the firmneſs of Delvile in his reſolution to avoid her, and knew that policy, as well as propriety, made it neceſſary ſhe ſhould part with what ſhe could only retain to remind her of one whom ſhe now moſt wiſhed to forget.

CHAP. XII.

AN INCIDENT.

THE ſpirits of Cecilia, however, internally failed her: ſhe conſidered her ſeparation from Delvile to be now, in all probability, for life, ſince ſhe ſaw that no ſtruggle either of intereſt, inclination, or health, could bend him from his purpoſe; his mother, too, ſeemed to regard his name and his exiſtence as equally valuable, and the ſcruples of his father ſhe was certain would be ſtill more inſurmountable. Her own pride, excited by theirs, made her, indeed, with more anger than ſorrow, ſee this general conſent to abandon her; but pride and anger both failed when ſhe conſidered the ſituation of his health: ſorrow, then, took the lead, and admitted no partner: it repreſented him to her not only as loſt to herſelf, but to the world, and ſo ſad grew her reflections, and ſo heavy her heart, that to avoid from Mrs. Charlton obſervations which pained her, ſhe ſtole into a ſummer-houſe in the garden the moment ſhe had done tea, declining any companion but her affectionate Fidel.

Her tenderneſs and her ſorrow found here a romantic conſolation in complaining to him of the abſence of his maſter, his voluntary exile, and her fears for his health: calling upon him to participate in her ſorrow, and lamenting that even this little relief would ſoon be denied her; and that in loſing Fidel no veſtige of Mortimer, but in her own breaſt, would remain. "Go, then, dear Fidel," ſhe cried, "carry back to your maſter all that nouriſhes his remembrance! Bid him not love you the leſs for having ſome time belonged to Cecilia; but never may his proud heart be fed with the vain glory of knowing how fondly for his ſake ſhe has cheriſhed you! Go, dear Fidel, guard him by night, and follow him by day; ſerve him with zeal, and love him with fidelity:—Oh that his health which were invincible as his pride!—there, alone, is he vulnerable—

Here Fidel, with a loud barking, ſuddenly ſprang away from her, and, as ſhe turned her eyes towards the door to ſee what had thus ſtartled him, ſhe beheld ſtanding there, as if immoveable, young Delvile himſelf!

Her aſtoniſhment at this ſight almoſt bereft her of her underſtanding; it appeared to her ſupernatural, and ſhe rather believed it was his ghoſt than himſelf. Fixed in more wonder, ſhe ſtood ſtill though petrified, her eyes almoſt burſting from their ſockets to be ſatisfied if what they ſaw was real.

Delvile, too, was ſome time ſpeechleſs; he looked not at her, indeed, with any doubt of her exiſtence, but as if what he had heard was to him as amazing as to her what ſhe ſaw. At length, however, tormented by the dog, who jumpt up to him, licked his hands, and by his rapturous joy forced himſelf into notice, he was moved to return his careſſes, ſaying, "Yes, *dear Fidel!* you have a claim indeed to my attention, and with the fondeſt gratitude will I cheriſh you ever!"

At the ſound of his voice, Cecilia again began to breathe; and Delvile having quieted the dog, now entered the ſummer-houſe, ſaying, as he advanced, "Is this poſſible!—am I not in a dream?—Good God! is it indeed poſſible!"

The conſternation of doubt and aſtoniſhment which had ſeized every faculty of Cecilia, now changed into certainty that Delvile indeed was preſent; all her recollection returned as ſhe liſtened to this queſtion, and the wild rambling of fancy with which ſhe had incautiouſly indulged her ſorrow, ruſhing ſuddenly upon her mind, ſhe felt herſelf wholly overpowered by conſciouſneſs and ſhame, and ſunk, almoſt fainting, upon a window-ſeat.

Delvile inſtantly flew to her, penetrated with gratitude, and filled with wonder and delight, which, however, internally combated by ſenſations leſs pleaſant, were too potent for controul, and he poured forth at her feet the moſt paſſionate acknowledgments.

Cecilia, ſurpriſed, affected, and trembling with a thouſand emotions, endeavoured to break from him and riſe; but, eagerly detaining her, "No, lovelieſt Miſs Beverley," he cried, "not thus muſt we now part; this moment only have I diſcovered what a treaſure I was leaving, and but for Fidel I had quitted it in ignorance for ever."

"Indeed," cried Cecilia, in the extremeſt agitation, "indeed you may believe me, Fidel is here quite by accident.—Lady Honoria took him away,—I knew nothing of the matter,—ſhe ſtole him, ſhe ſent him, ſhe did every thing herſelf."

"O kind Lady Honoria!" cried Delvile,

more and more delighted, "how ſhall I ever thank her!—and did ſhe alſo tell you to careſs and to cheriſh him?—to talk to him of his maſter—"

"Oh heaven!" interrupted Cecilia, in an agony of mortification and ſhame, "to what has my unguarded folly reduced me!" Then again endeavouring to break from him, "Leave me, Mr. Delvile," ſhe cried, "leave me, or let me paſs!—never can I ſee you more!—never bear you again in my ſight!"

"Come, *dear Fidel!*" cried he, ſtill detaining her, "come and plead for your maſter! come and aſk in his name who *now* has a proud heart, whoſe pride *now* is invincible!"

"Oh go!" cried Cecilia, looking away from him while ſhe ſpoke, "repeat not thoſe hateful words, if you wiſh me not to deteſt myſelf eternally!"

"Ever lovely Miſs Beverley," cried he, more ſeriouſly, "why this reſentment? why all this cauſeleſs diſtreſs? has not *my* heart long ſince been known to you? have you not witneſſed its ſufferings, and been aſſured of its tenderneſs? why, then, this untimely reſerve? this unabating coldneſs? Oh why try to rob me of the felicity you have inadvertently given me! and to ſour the happineſs of a moment that recompenſes ſuch exquiſite miſery!"

"Oh, Mr. Delvile!" cried ſhe, impatiently, ciently, though half ſoftened, "was this honourable or right to ſteal upon me thus privately—to liſten to me thus ſecretly—"

"You blame me," cried he, "too ſoon; your own friend, Mrs. Charlton, permitted me to come hither in ſearch of you;—then, indeed when I heard the ſound of your voice—when I heard that voice talk of *Fidel*—of his *maſter*——"

"Oh ſtop, ſtop!" cried ſhe; "I cannot ſupport the recollection! there is no puniſhment, indeed, which my own indiſcretion does not merit,—but I ſhall have ſufficient in the bitterneſs of ſelf-reproach!"

"Why will you talk thus, my beloved Miſs Beverley? what have you done,—what, let me aſk, have *I* done, that ſuch infinite diſgrace and depreſſion ſhould follow this little ſenſibility to a paſſion ſo fervent? Does it not render you more dear to me than ever? does it not add new life, new vigour, to the devotion by which I am bound to you?"

"No, no," cried the mortified Cecilia, who from the moment ſhe found herſelf betrayed, believed herſelf to be loſt, "far other is the effect it will have! and the ſame mad folly by which I am ruined in my own eſteem, will ruin me in yours!—I cannot endure to think of it!—why will you perſiſt in detaining me?—You have filled me with anguiſh and mortification,—you have taught me the bittereſt of leſſons, that of hating and contemning myſelf!"

"Good heaven," cried he, much hurt, "what ſtrange apprehenſions thus terrify you? are you with me leſs ſafe than with yourſelf? is it my honour you doubt? is it my integrity you fear? Surely I cannot be ſo little known to you; and to make proteſtations now, would but give a new alarm to a delicacy already too agitated;—elſe would I tell you that more ſacred than my life will I hold what I have heard, that the words juſt now graven on my heart, ſhall remain there to eternity unſeen; and that higher than ever, not only in my love, but my eſteem, is the beautiful ſpeaker—"

"Ah no!" cried Cecilia, with a ſigh, "that at leaſt is impoſſible, for lower than ever is ſhe ſunk from deſerving it!"

"No," cried he, with fervour, "ſhe is raiſed, ſhe is exalted! I find her more excellent and perfect than I had even dared believe her; I diſcover new virtues in the ſpring of every action; I ſee what I took for indifference, was dignity; I perceive what I imagined the moſt rigid inſenſibility, was nobleneſs, was propriety, was true greatneſs of mind!"

Cecilia was ſomewhat appeaſed by this ſpeech; and, after a little heſitation, ſhe ſaid, with half a ſmile, "Muſt I thank you for this good-nature, in ſeeking to reconcile me with myſelf?—or ſhall I quarrel with you for flattery in giving me praiſe you can ſo little think I merit?"

"Ah!" cried he, "were I to praiſe as I think of you! were my language permitted to accord with my opinion of your worth, you would not then ſimply call me a flatterer, you would tell me I was an idolater, and fear at leaſt for my principles, if not for my underſtanding."

"I ſhall have but little right, however," ſaid Cecilia, again riſing, "to arraign your underſtanding, while I act as if bereft of my own. Now, at leaſt, let me paſs; indeed you will greatly diſpleaſe me by any farther oppoſition."

"Will you ſuffer me, then, to ſee you early to-morrow morning?"

"No, Sir; nor the next morning, nor the morning after that! This meeting has been wrong, another would be worſe; in this I have accuſation enough for folly, in another the charge would be far more heavy."

"Does Miſs Beverley, then," cried he, gravely, "think me capable of deſiring to ſee her for mere ſelfiſh gratification? of intending to trifle either with her time or her feelings? no; the conference I deſire will be important and deciſive. This night I ſhall devote ſolely to deliberation; to-morrow ſhall be given to action. Without ſome thinking I dare venture at no plan;—I preſume not to communicate to you the various interests that divide me, but the reſult of them all I can take no denial to your hearing."

Cecilia, who felt when thus ſtated the juſtice of his requeſt, now oppoſed it no longer; but inſiſted upon his inſtantly departing.

"True," cried he, "I muſt go!—the longer I ſtay, the more I am faſcinated, and the weaker are thoſe reaſoning powers of which I now want the ſtrongeſt exertion." He then repeated his profeſſions of eternal regard, beſought her not to regret the happineſs ſhe had given him, and after diſobeying her injunctions of going till ſhe was ſeriouſly diſpleaſed, he only ſtaid to obtain her pardon, and permiſſion to be early the next morning, and then, though ſtill ſlowly and reluctantly, he left her.

Scarce was Cecilia again alone, but the whole of what had paſſed ſeemed a viſion of her imagination. That Delvile ſhould be at Bury, that he ſhould viſit her at Mrs. Charlton's, ſurpriſe her by herſelf, and diſcover her moſt ſecret thoughts, appeared ſo ſtrange and ſo incredible, that occupied rather by wonder than thinking, ſhe continued almoſt motionleſs in the place where he had left her, till Mrs. Charlton ſent to requeſt that ſhe would return to the houſe. She then enquired if any body was with her, and being anſwered in the negative, obeyed the ſummons.

Mrs. Charlton, with a ſmile of much meaning, hoped ſhe had had a pleaſant walk: but Cecilia ſeriouſly remonſtrated on the dangerous imprudence ſhe had committed in ſuffering her to be ſo unguardedly ſurpriſed. Mrs. Charlton, however, more anxious for her future and ſolid happineſs, than for her preſent apprehenſions and delicacy, repented not the ſtep ſhe had taken; and when ſhe gathered from Cecilia the ſubſtance of what had paſt, unmindful of the expoſtulations which accompanied it, ſhe thought with exultation that the ſudden meeting ſhe had permitted, would now, by making known to each their mutual affection, determine them to defer no longer a union upon which their mutual peace of mind ſo much depended. And Cecilia, finding ſhe had been thus betrayed deſignedly, not inadvertently, could hardly reproach her zeal, though ſhe lamented its indiſcretion.

She then aſked by what means he had obtained admiſſion, and made himſelf known; and heard that he had enquired at the door for Miſs Beverley, and having ſent in his name, was ſhewn into the parlour, where Mrs. Charlton, much pleaſed with his appearance, had ſuddenly conceived the little plan which ſhe had executed, of contriving a ſurpriſe for Cecilia, from which ſhe rationally expected the very conſequences that enſued;

though the immediate means ſhe had not conjectured.

The account was ſtill unſatisfactory to Cecilia, who could frame to herſelf no poſſible reaſon for a viſit ſo extraordinary, and ſo totally inconſiſtent with his declarations and reſolutions.

This, however, was a matter but of little moment, compared with the other ſubjects to which the interview had given riſe: Delvile, upon whom ſo long, though ſecretly, her deareſt hopes of happineſs had reſted, was now become acquainted with his power, and knew himſelf the maſter of her deſtiny; he had quitted her avowedly to decide what it ſhould be, ſince his preſent ſubject of deliberation included her fate in his own; the next morning he was to call, and acquaint her with his decree, not doubting her concurrence whichever way he reſolved.

A ſubjection ſo undue, and which ſhe could not but conſider as diſgraceful, both ſhocked and afflicted her; and the reflection that the man who of all men ſhe preferred, was acquainted with her preference, yet heſitated whether to accept or abandon her, mortified and provoked her alternately, occupied her thoughts the whole night, and kept her from peace and from reſt.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIII.

A PROPOSITION.

EARLY the next morning, Delvile again made his appearance. Cecilia, who was at breakfaſt with Mrs. and Miſs Charltons, received him with the moſt painful confuſion, and he was evidently himſelf in a ſtate of the utmoſt perturbation. Mrs. Charlton made a pretence almoſt immediately for ſending away both her grand-daughters, and then, without taking the trouble of deviſing one for herſelf, aroſe and followed them, though Cecilia made ſundry ſigns of ſolicitation that ſhe would ſtay.

Finding herſelf now alone with him, ſhe haſtily, and without knowing what ſhe ſaid, cried, "How is Mrs. Delvile, Sir? Is ſhe ſtill at Briſtol?"

"At Briſtol? no; have you never heard ſhe is returned to Delvile Caſtle?"

"O, true!—I meant Delvile Caſtle,—but I hope ſhe found ſome benefit from the waters?"

"She had not, I believe, any occaſion to try them."

Cecilia, aſhamed of theſe two following

miſtakes, coloured high, but ventured not again to ſpeak: and Delvile, who ſeemed big with ſomething he feared to utter, aroſe, and walked for a few inſtants about the room; after which, exclaiming aloud, "How vain is every plan which paſſes the preſent hour!" he advanced to Cecilia, who pretended to be looking at ſome work, and ſeating himſelf next her, "when we parted yeſterday," he cried, "I preſumed to ſay one night alone ſhould be given to deliberation,—and to-day, this very day to action!—but I forgot that though in deliberating I had only myſelf to conſult, in acting I was not ſo independent; and that when my own doubts were ſatisfied, and my own reſolutions taken, other doubts and other reſolutions muſt be conſidered, by which my purpoſed proceedings might be retarded, might perhaps be wholly prevented!"

He pauſed, but Cecilia, unable to conjecture to what he was leading, made not any anſwer.

"Upon you, madam," he continued, "all that is good or evil of my future life, as far as relates to its happineſs or miſery, will, from this very hour, almoſt ſolely depend: yet much as I rely upon your goodneſs, and ſuperior as I know you to trifling or affectation, what I now come to propoſe—to petition—to entreat—I cannot ſummon courage to mention, from a dread of alarming you!"

What next, thought Cecilia, trembling at this introduction, is preparing for me! does he mean to aſk me to ſolicit Mrs. Delvile's conſent! or from myſelf muſt he receive commands that we ſhould never meet more!

"Is Miſs Beverley," cried he, "determined not to ſpeak to me? Is ſhe bent upon ſilence only to intimidate me? Indeed if ſhe knew how greatly I reſpect her, ſhe would honour me with more confidence."

"When, Sir," cried ſhe, "do you mean to make your tour?"

"Never!" cried he, with fervour, "unleſs baniſhed by you, never!—no, lovelieſt Miſs Beverley, I can now quit you no more! Fortune, beauty, worth, and ſweetneſs I had power to relinquiſh, and ſevere as was the taſk, I compelled myſelf to perform it—but when to theſe I find joined ſo attractive a ſoftneſs,—a pity for my ſufferings ſo unexpectedly gentle——no! ſweeteſt Miſs Beverley, I can quit you no more!" And then, ſeizing her hand, with yet greater energy, he went on, "I here," he cried, "offer you my vows, I here own you ſole arbitreſs of my fate! I give you not merely the poſſeſſion of my heart,—that, indeed, I had no power to with-hold from you,—but I give you the direction of my conduct, I entreat you to become my counſellor and guide. Will Miſs

Beverley accept ſuch an office? Will ſhe deign to liſten to ſuch a prayer?"

"Yes," cried Cecilia, involuntarily delighted to find that ſuch was the reſult of his night's deliberation, "I am moſt ready to give you my counſel; which I now do,—that you ſet off for the continent to-morrow morning."

"O how malicious!" cried he, half laughing, "yet not ſo immediately do I even requeſt your counſel; ſomething muſt firſt be done to qualify you for giving it: penetration, ſkill and underſtanding, however amply you poſſeſs them, are not ſufficient to fit you for the charge; ſomething ſtill more is requiſite; you muſt be inveſted with fuller powers, you muſt have a right leſs diſputable, and a title, that not alone inclination, not even judgment alone muſt ſanctify,—but which law muſt enforce, and rites the moſt ſolemn ſupport!"

"I think, then," ſaid Cecilia, deeply bluſhing, "I muſt be content to forbear giving any counſel at all, if the qualifications for it are ſo difficult of acquirement."

"Reſent not my preſumption," cried he, "my beloved Miſs Beverley, but let the ſeverity of my recent ſufferings palliate my preſent temerity; for where affliction has been deep and ſerious, cauſeleſs and unneceſſary miſery will find little encouragement; and mine has been ſerious indeed! Sweetly, then, permit me, in proportion to its bitterneſs, to rejoice in the ſoft reverſe which now flatters me with its approach."

Cecilia, abaſhed and uneaſy, uncertain of what was to follow, and unwilling to ſpeak till more aſſured, pauſed, and then abruptly exclaimed, "I am afraid Mrs. Charlton is waiting for me," and would have hurried away: but Delvile, almoſt forcibly preventing her, compelled her to ſtay; and after a ſhort converſation, on his ſide the moſt impaſſioned, and on her's the moſt confuſed, obtained from her, what, indeed, after the ſurpriſe of the preceding evening ſhe could but ill deny, a frank confirmation of his power over her heart, and an ingenuous, though reluctant acknowledgment, how long he had poſſeſſed it.

This confeſſion, made, as affairs now ſtood, wholly in oppoſition to her judgment, was torn from her by an impetuous urgency which ſhe had not preſence of mind to reſiſt, and with which Delvile, when particularly animated, had long been accuſtomed to overpower all oppoſition. The joy with which he heard it, though but little mixed with wonder, was as violent as the eagerneſs with which he had ſought it; yet it was not of long duration, a ſudden and moſt painful recollection preſently quelled it, and even in the midſt of his rapturous acknowledgments, ſeemed to ſtrike him to the heart.

Cecilia, ſoon perceiving both in his countenance and manner an alteration that ſhocked her, bitterly repented an avowal ſhe could never recall, and looked aghaſt with expectation and dread.

Delvile, who with quickneſs ſaw a change of expreſſion in her, of which in himſelf he was unconſcious, exclaimed, with much emotion, "Oh how tranſient is human felicity! How rapidly fly thoſe rare and exquiſite moments in which it is perfect! Ah! ſweeteſt Miſs Beverley, what words ſhall I find to ſoften what I have now to reveal! to tell you that after goodneſs, candour, generoſity ſuch as yours, a requeſt, a ſupplication remains yet to be uttered, that baniſhes me, if refuſed, from your preſence for ever!"

Cecilia, extremely diſmayed, deſired to know what it was: an evident dread of offending her kept him ſome time from proceeding; but at length, after repeatedly expreſſing his fears of her diſapprobation, and a repugnance even on his own part to the very meaſure he was obliged to urge, he acknowledged that all his hopes of being ever united to her, reſted upon obtaining her conſent to an immediate and ſecret marriage.

Cecilia, thunderſtruck by this declaration, remained for a few inſtants too much confounded to ſpeak; but when he was beginning an explanatory apology, ſhe ſtarted up, and glowing with indignation, ſaid, "I had flattered myſelf, Sir, that both my character and my conduct, independent of my ſituation in life, would have exempted me at all times from a propoſal which I ſhall ever think myſelf degraded by having heard."

And then ſhe was again going, but Delvile ſtill preventing her, ſaid, "I knew too well how much you would be alarmed, and ſuch was my dread of your diſpleaſure that it had power even to embitter the happineſs I ſought with ſo much earneſtneſs, and to render your condeſcenſion inſufficient to enſure it. Yet wonder not at my ſcheme; wild as it may appear, it is the reſult of deliberation; and cenſurable as it may ſeem, it ſprings not from unworthy motives."

"Whatever may be your motives with reſpect to yourſelf, Sir," ſaid Cecilia, "with reſpect to me they muſt certainly be diſgraceful; I will not, therefore, liſten to them."

"You wrong me cruelly," cried he, with warmth; "and a moment's reflection muſt tell you, that however diſtinct may be our honour or our diſgrace in every other inſtance, in that by which we ſhould be united, they muſt inevitably be the ſame: and far ſooner would I voluntarily relinquiſh you, than be myſelf acceſſary to tainting that delicacy of which the unſullied purity has been the chief ſource of my admiration."

"Why, then," cried Cecilia, reproachfully, "have you mentioned to me ſuch a project?"

"Circumſtances the moſt ſingular, and neceſſity the moſt unavoidable," he anſwered, "ſhould alone have ever tempted me to form it. No longer ago than yeſterday morning, I believed myſelf incapable of even wiſhing it; but extraordinary ſituations call for extraordinary reſolutions, and in private as well as public life, palliate, at leaſt, extraordinary actions. Alas! the propoſal which ſo much offends you is my final reſource! it is the ſole barrier between myſelf and perpetual miſery!—the only expedient in my power to ſave me from eternally parting with you!—for I am now cruelly compelled to confeſs, that my family, I am certain, will never conſent to our union!"

"Neither, then, Sir," cried Cecilia, with great ſpirit, "will I! The diſdain I may meet with I pretend not to retort, but wilfully to encounter, were meanly to deſerve it. I will enter into no family in oppoſition to its wiſhes, I will conſent to no alliance that may expoſe me to indignity. Nothing is ſo contagious as contempt!— The example of your friends might work powerfully upon yourſelf, and who ſhall dare aſſure me you would not catch the infection?"

"*I* dare aſſure you!" cried he; "haſty you may perhaps think me, and ſomewhat impetuous I cannot deny myſelf; but believe me not of ſo wretched a character as to be capable, in any affair of moment, of fickleneſs or caprice."

"But what, Sir, is my ſecurity to the contrary? Have you not this moment avowed that but yeſterday you held in abhorrence the very plan that to-day you propoſe? And may you not to-morrow reſume again the ſame opinion?"

"Cruel Miſs Beverley! how unjuſt is this inference! If yeſterday I diſapproved what to-day I recommend, a little recollection muſt ſurely tell you why: and that not my opinion, but my ſituation is changed."

The conſcious Cecilia here turned away her head; too certain he alluded to the diſcovery of her partiality.

"Have you not yourſelf," he continued, "witneſſed the ſteadineſs of my mind? Have you not beheld me fly, when I had power to purſue, and avoid, when I had opportunity to ſeek you? After witneſſing my conſtancy upon ſuch trying occaſions, is it equitable, is it right, to ſuſpect me of wavering?"

"But what," cried ſhe, "was the conſtancy which brought you into Suffolk!—When all occaſion was over for our meeting any more, when you told me you were going abroad, and took leave of me for-ever,—where, then, was your ſteadineſs in this unneceſſary journey?"

"Have a care," cried he, half ſmiling, and taking a letter from his pocket, "have a care, upon this point, how you provoke me to ſhew my juſtification!"

"Ah!" cried Cecilia, bluſhing, "'tis ſome trick of Lady Honoria!"

"No, upon my honour. The authority is leſs doubtful: I believe I ſhould hardly elſe have regarded it."

Cecilia, much alarmed, held out her hand for the letter; and looking firſt at the end was much aſtoniſhed to ſee the name of Biddulph. She then caſt her eye over the beginning, and when ſhe ſaw her own name, read the following paragraph.

"Miſs Beverley, as you doubtleſs know, is returned into Suffolk; every body here ſaw her with the utmoſt ſurpriſe; from the moment I had heard of her reſidence in Delvile-

[illegible], I had given her up for loſt: but, upon [illegible] unexpected appearance among us again, I was weak enough once more to make trial of her heart. I ſoon found, however, that the pain of a ſecond rejection *you* might have ſpared me, and that though ſhe had quitted Delvile-Caſtle, ſhe had not for nothing entered it: at the ſound of your name, ſhe bluſhes; at the mention of your illneſs, ſhe turns pale; and the dog you have given her, which I recollected immediately, is her darling companion. Oh happy Delvile! yet ſo lovely a conqueſt you abandon——"

Cecilia could read no more; the letter dropt from her hand: to find herſelf thus by her own emotions betrayed, made her inſtantly conclude ſhe was univerſally diſcovered: and turning ſick at the ſuppoſition, all her ſpirit forſook her, and ſhe burſt into tears.

"Good heaven," cried Delvile, extremely ſhocked, "what has thus affected you? Can the jealous ſurmiſes of an apprehenſive rival——"

"Do not talk to me," interrupted ſhe, impatiently, "and do not detain me,—I am extremely diſturbed,——I wiſh to be alone,—I beg, I even intreat you would leave me."

"I will go, I will obey you in every thing!"

thing!" cried he, eagerly, "tell me but when I may return, and when you will ſuffer me to explain to you all the motives of my propoſal?"

"Never, never!" cried ſhe, with earneſtneſs, "I am ſufficiently lowered already, but never will I intrude myſelf into a family that diſdains me!"

"Diſdains? No, you are revered in it! who could diſdain you! That fatal clauſe alone——"

"Well, well, pray leave me; indeed I cannot hear you; I am unfit for argument, and all reaſoning now is nothing leſs than cruelty."

"I am gone," cried he, "this moment! I would not even wiſh to take advantage of your agitation in order to work upon your ſenſibility. My deſire is not to ſurpriſe, but to reconcile you to my plan. What is it I ſeek in Miſs Beverley? An heireſs? No, as ſuch ſhe has ſeen I could reſiſt her; nor yet the light trifler of a ſpring or two, neglected when no longer a novelty; no, no!—it is a companion for ever, it is a ſolace for every care, it is a boſom friend through every period of life that I ſeek in Miſs Beverley! Her eſteem, therefore, to me is as precious as her affection, for how can I hope her friendſhip in the winter of my days, if their brighter and gayer ſeaſon is darkened by doubts of my integrity? All ſhall be clear and explicit; no latent cauſe of uneaſineſs ſhall diſturb our future quiet: we will now be ſincere, that hereafter we may be eaſy; and ſweetly, in unclouded felicity, time ſhall glide away imperceptibly, and we will make an intereſt with each other in the gaiety of youth, to bear with the infirmities of age, and alleviate them by kindneſs and ſympathy. And then ſhall my ſoothing Cecilia——"

"O ſay no more!" interrupted ſhe, ſoftened in her own deſpite by a plan ſo conſonant to her wiſhes, "what language is this! how improper for you to uſe, or me to hear!"

She then very earneſtly inſiſted upon his going; and after a thouſand times taking leave and returning, promiſing obedience, yet purſuing his own way, he at length ſaid, if ſhe would conſent to receive a letter from him, he would endeavour to commit what he had to communicate to paper, ſince their mutual agitation made him unable to explain himſelf with clearneſs, and rather hurt his cauſe than aſſiſted it, by leaving all his arguments unfiniſhed and obſcure.

Another diſpute now aroſe; Cecilia proteſting ſhe would receive no letter, and hear nothing upon the ſubject; and Delvile impetuouſly declaring he would ſubmit to no award without being firſt heard. At length he conquered, and at length he departed.

Cecilia then felt her whole heart ſink within her at the unhappineſs of her ſituation. She conſidered herſelf now condemned to refuſe Delvile herſelf, as the only condition upon which he even ſolicited her favour, neither the ſtrictneſs of her principles, nor the delicacy of her mind, would ſuffer her to accept. Her diſpleaſure at the propoſal had been wholly unaffected, and ſhe regarded it as an injury to her character ever to have received it; yet that Delvile's pride of heart ſhould give way to his paſſion, that he ſhould love her with ſo much fondneſs as to relinquiſh for her the ambitious ſchemes of his family, and even that darling name which ſo lately ſeemed annexed to his exiſtence, were circumſtances to which ſhe was not inſenſible, and proofs of tenderneſs and regard which ſhe had thought incompatible with the general ſpirit of his diſpoſition. Yet however by theſe ſhe was gratified, ſhe reſolved never to comply with ſo humiliating a meaſure, but to wait the conſent of his friends, or renounce him for-ever.

END OF THE THIRD VOLUME.